

THE COUNT OF TALAVERA.

I.

DURING the summer of 1718, after a two years' absence in foreign parts, I, Ferdinand Huyck, once more set foot in my native country, Holland.

Arrived at Amersfoort at an early hour, I left the coach, and determined to continue my journey on foot as far as Naarden, and then to travel by barge to Amsterdam.

It was a beautiful morning ; in fact, for a pedestrian, the weather was rather too fine. There was little or no wind, and as the day drew on, the air, close and oppressive, gradually became heavy with that peculiar haze which not unfrequently is the forerunner of an atmospheric change.

In the north-west of the horizon threatening clouds were gathering, and swarms of sea-gulls hovered about like messengers of ill-omen presaging the coming storm. The sun was as red as blood, and with its scorching rays turned the sand of the footpath into glowing embers. To give relief to my wearied eyes I gazed on the black clouds in the distance, and I gladly anticipated the rain which would refresh the parching soil and ease me on my road. In this mood I continued to walk on steadily,

and soon forgot the difficulties of the journey; when I bethought myself that each step brought me nearer to my beloved parents and to my native city. After a long walk, my appetite grew keen, and it was with infinite pleasure that I came in view of the steeple of Zoest, where I determined to halt and breakfast. At this point a bend in the road afforded me a full view of the exterior of the village church, which looked charming. In bold outline to the sombre sky in the rear, and the luxuriant verdure surrounding the edifice, arose the grey steeple, striped by the rays of the morning sun, whilst the hilly ground still separating me from the village and the extensive fields rich with golden corn and snowy buckwheat heightened the charms of the landscape. I never was an enthusiast, but the beautiful aspects of nature always impressed me deeply; and at that moment I involuntarily fell into a peaceful, meditative mood, and on entering the village wiped away a tear.

This feeling, however, soon passed away when I came upon the chief inn of the place, distinguished from the other houses by an elaborately carved signboard suspended from the front.

A number of country carts ~~and~~ waggons filled the yard, where an old jade of a horse regaled himself with fresh-cut grass. The animal was harnessed to an old-fashioned tilt cart, and leaning against this conveyance stood a man of tall stature, attired in a long red cloak, so glaring that it looked in the sunlight like fire. I could not discern his features, as his back was turned; but my appetite rebelled against any further delay; I left the stranger to himself, and, lifting the latch, I opened the door and entered the inn.

I ordered some refreshment, and sat down at the lower end of a long table. I had scarcely had time to observe that the upper end was occupied by a sturdy, well-dressed countryman, and that my other neighbour presented a rather shabby appearance, when I was aroused by a shrill cry of "Pipes ! pipe-cleaners ! pick them out where you like ! I ain't gained a farthing yet to-day, may I never move !"

On turning round, a pedlar stood behind me.

"No, thank you, my man," said I, after looking at him for a moment. "I do not want anything ;" and in order to make him understand that I wished to be left alone, I abruptly turned my back upon him.

"Now, get along with you," he once more sang out, at the same time thrusting his hand containing a dozen or so of pipe-cleaners directly under my nose. "Just let me sell you a dozen ; I ain't got a farthing about me, may I never move ; and I've got a long way to go to-day."

Knowing from experience how useless it was to take offence at such an unmannerly intrusion, I again contrived to thrust the pipe-cleaners from me.

But there was no getting away from him. With the doggedness common to folks of his calling, he continually worried me with his shouting, and occasionally, by way of a more forcible argument, he contrived to press his whole tray against me, so that I was compelled to look him straight in the face. I now felt certain that I had seen that olive complexion, the sharp features, and sparkling black eyes before ; but where and when, I could not recollect. Having at length rid myself of his company by buying a corkscrew of him, I resolved once more to turn my eyes to the bar in anticipation of coming breakfast.

"Good-luck to you," said the pedlar ; "but look out," he added, in a whisper ; "don't forget to ask for a knife with your breakfast, and don't you use the one that stands down there."

I listened with some surprise ; but casting my eyes towards the spot which he indicated, I noticed a knife which my opposite neighbour had stuck point downwards in the table. At the same moment I recollectcd having frequently heard that some of the peasants in that part of the country were in the habit of hanging their knives in some prominent part of the wall in an inn, or stick it in the table, and that the unwary stranger who used it, or even looked at it, was challenged to a fight. With an almost imperceptible nod, I thanked the pedlar for his good advice, which seemed to me an ample return for the price I paid for the corkscrew. Having obtained a knife from the serving girl, I commenced my breakfast, and as I did so I particularly noticed an expression of disappointment on my neighbour's features, which were most unprepossessing. His hair, which was lank and thin, and of no particular colour, fell almost upon his shoulders; his eyes had something of the sneaking glance of a hyena, and were nearly bare of eyebrows or lashes ; his mouth was wide and drawn on one side of his face. Whether our friend possessed a nose or not was, as yet, an unsolved problem ; for an indescribable number of furrows, seams, cross-lines, and scars combined to unite the shapeless little stump above his mouth with cheek and upper-lip. His dress was in perfect harmony with the entire appearance of such an amiable being, and was partly that of a countryman, partly that of a sailor, and full of patches and tatters.

The peculiar expression which I had observed in his features became more noticeable ; and after blowing a great cloud of tobacco smoke from his mouth, and gulping down a glass of brandy that stood before him, he asked me why I had not made use of the knife sticking in the table.

"I did not see it," said I indifferently ; "besides, I prefer to have a knife for myself."

"You didn't see it!" he exclaimed with an oath. "What was that you set your eyes on just now?" It's my knife, hang you," he continued, striking his clenched fist upon the table and raising his voice ; "and any one who looks at it must have a go with me; there's no help for that. You looked at it, and when you've swallowed your bread we'll just see who's the best man of us two."

This bold challenge produced a sudden silence among the farmers present, who were discussing questions of harvests and agriculture. In fact, I fancied that many of them already gloated over the idea of seeing a right good fight with knives. As for myself, as may be imagined, I was not quite at my ease. However, I felt that I had better remain as unconcerned as possible, and endeavour to avert the storm by an undaunted attitude. I emptied my glass, and then, as coolly as possible, I said that I saw no cause whatever for a fight, and had not given offence to any one. My words were well received by the farmers ; and the peasant at the other end of the table, approaching the sailor, inquired—

"What has the chap done to you, Andrew Mathissen, that you want to fight?"

"Well, Boss Roggefled," said Andrew, "that fellow

there sits looking at my knife, and gives me a deuced impudent answer into the bargain. Am I to be set upon by such a lad? But he is only a numskull of a fellow, so I won't handle him too roughly; and just after he has got one little slash across his carving board, I'll let him go to the deuce. But fight he shall."

With this he rose from his seat and approached me.

"Take care!" said I, crossing my arms and looking him straight in the face. "Don't touch me. You will repent it if you do."

"I'll repent it, you confounded numskull!" he cried, rushing up to me. "I'll just teach you to strike your flag. Up you get now. Now you're beginning to talk like that, we'll see if I can't cut a slice from your frontispiece."

I must confess that I began to find my position far from pleasant, for I saw no great fun in the idea of returning to my parents without a nose. Wherever I glanced I encountered none but looks of indifference, and the farmers continued to smoke their pipes and sip their spirits as imperturbably as possible.

Aid, however, came from another quarter.

At the first words of Andrew, the pedlar rushed to the landlord and whispered something in his ear.

The latter seemed somewhat confused at the mysterious information, and, in an undertone, asked—

"What is that you say, the son of . . . ?"

The pedlar's reply was given in such a low whisper that I could only distinguish the words—

"High bailiff of Amsterdam."

"That's rather awkward," said the landlord. "Those Amsterdam magistrates have far-reaching arms, and they would make it pretty hot for me if I left

one of their crew in a pickle. I say, friend Andrew," he all at once began, laying his hand on his noisy guest's shoulder.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Andrew sullenly.

"What do I want?" repeated the innkeeper, placing his corpulent figure betwixt us. "I want you to leave that lad alone. He has not done you any injury. Sit down and drink your liquor. Don't you see that he isn't your match?"

"So!" said Andrew, with a savage leer, "you'll get plenty of customers, when you're going on like that, trying to prevent a thoroughbred countryman like me, who knows all the islands of the West Indies as well as you know your way to your cellar, from having a quiet little fight. But do as ye like—that's what I say; and I promise you that you've seen my face for the last time if things are to go on like that."

"Come, come," said the host, giving Andrew a friendly tap on the shoulder, "you mustn't talk like that. You know very well that I like to see an honest set-to as well as anybody; but then it must be a square business on both sides, so that neither magistrate nor bailiff can have anything to say about it."

"Landlord," said I, "just give us a drop of brandy, and let us put an end to the matter."

Andrew accepted a glass; and having emptied it, by way of a final warning, remarked—

"And I wish you may never cross my path again, just for your own sake."

I was somewhat struck with this strange wish; the tone in which it was uttered, as well as the sidelong glance which accompanied it, impressed me with a vague fear.

A kind of false shame moved me to stay a few moments longer in the inn, so that a too-hurried departure might not be attributed to cowardice.

"Is it true?" I heard Roggefeliask one of his mates; "is it true that Effie Jansen was robbed last night on the Laren heath?"

"Yes, and stripped as well," was the reply; "I hardly believe that the rascals left a rag on her body. There were three of 'em, I've heard."

Here Andrew interposed with a ditty, sung at the top of his voice.

"It's Black Peter's * band," said another farmer.

"Indeed," muttered Andrew between his teeth, at once resuming his song.

"Now, you, who've been everywhere, and have roved about on so many seas," remarked the landlord to Andrew, "I suppose you've seen Black Peter too, eh?"

"Bother Black Peter!" cried Andrew, pulling a wry face; "it's all bosh what folks is a-talking. To ease a jolly fat trading ship of her over-ballast, that's the kind o' work for Black Peter; do you think a true tar like him would trouble himself to rob an old wench on the high-road?"

Then he once more resumed his song.

I fancied that his idea was to give another turn to the conversation, and it was as if some secret voice whispered to me that Andrew knew more about these escapades than he cared to confess.

I now thought I had stayed long enough, and was just going out, when my attention was directed to the man

* Black Peter was a well-known bandit who, during the latter part of the last century, scoured the woods in the north-east of Holland and the German frontiers with his band.

in the red cloak, whom I had noticed on my arrival at the tavern, who came into the room, and in an authoritative tone ordered some breakfast.

The stranger took up a position in front of the bar, and stood erect with folded arms, evidently unaware that he was the observed of all observers.

His appearance, indeed, was well calculated to attract attention; he was unusually tall of stature, but very well shaped, and the red cloak, which almost fell below his knees, was worn with a natural grace, and gave something noble and picturesque to whatever attitude he assumed. The lower part of his features was concealed by a black scarf, and the broad brim of his hat fell over his forehead and temples, so that little more could be distinguished than a somewhat aquiline nose and a heavy iron-grey moustache.

On his arrival the pedlar took refuge in an obscure corner, as though that gigantic form struck him with terror, but after many furtive glances towards the red cloak he at length summed up courage, and, approaching the stranger, commenced to offer him his wares for sale.

"Pipe-cleaners! knives! scissors! spectacles! Buy somethink, master; ain't got a farthing about me, as true as heaven." The stranger turned aside.

"Now, let me earn something by you," continued the pedlar, laying hold of his cloak; "almanacs, snuff-boxes! tracts on the politics of the day—nice to read along the road. Or will you rather have some comedies, or the Dying Speech of Barneveld?"

"Go away!" muttered the stranger, indignantly snatching his cloak out of the pedlar's hands.

At the same time he took a piece of bread and a plate

from the counter, and made a movement towards the street door. But he turned round with some abruptness, looked about as if in search of something, took up Andrew's knife, and having cut up his bread went out, followed by the pedlar, who was still loud in praise of his wares.

All at once Andrew rushed along through the street door into the street, and flourished his knife in the air, whilst the innkeeper and the farmers followed at his heels.

"Confound it!" he cried, looking at the stranger, "you shan't get off so easy as that numskull. Who told you to touch my knife?"

"Don't you hear you're challenged," continued Andrew, as the stranger, taking no heed of his words, stood immovable. "What did you want with my knife?"

The stranger made no answer, but having emptied his plate, handed it to the landlord, and asked what there was to pay.

"Hang it, man, will you answer?" growled Andrew, grasping the stranger by the cloak.

"Now, look here," said the latter, "I interfere with nobody, but nobody must touch me, or it will be the worse for him."

"I say, old fellow," said Andrew, "don't you have so much to say; you're a tall one, but I've given bigger ones than you a taster. If you like, I'll just cut you a little bit of a red ribbon over that face o' yours."

The stranger did not condescend to reply, but he went to the driver, who was just coming along with a new-shod horse, and ordered him to make haste.

This was looked upon by all as a sign of fear, and the landlord, not sorry at having a chance of seeing Andrew display his prowess, jocularly remarked to Roggefeld—

"Now, then, we'll have a lark, and our friend Andrew will stand treat, for he always does that jolly fair, I must say, when he has made his mark."

"I don't believe it," said Roggefeld; "that fellow ain't one of the right sort."

"What the deuce!" exclaimed Andrew, "I ain't worth your answer? And you would march away without showing fight, would you? No, old man, as tall as you are, you shall ask my pardon on your knees or—up with your knife."

"Well, what are you waiting for?" asked the stranger of his driver, who stood staring about him. "Put the harness on, and don't bother yourself with the talk of this drunken brute."

"Drunken brute! I drunk?" roared Andrew in a great rage. "Wait a bit—I'll teach ye!"

At the same moment he fell upon the traveller, who was just helping the driver to harness the horse. The stranger proved to be more on his guard than he had supposed, for, suddenly turning round, he dealt the would-be combatant such a blow in the chest that he fell back and lay on the ground gasping for breath.

"The deuce! that was a stunner," said Roggefeld; "that fellow ain't a soft one either."

"It's disgraceful," growled Andrew, getting up with difficulty. "And now I take all of you to witness if he ain't to fight me."

"Fight he must," was the unanimous reply; "there's no help for that."

"And I take you all to witness," said the stranger sternly, "that it was not I who picked a quarrel; and that, if the law should follow up this affair, punishment will fall heavier on those who attack an unoffending

traveller, or who permit it, than on him who defends himself when attacked."

"That's nothing to do with it," cried the farmers. "You've touched his knife, and you've struck him; you must fight."

I saw that the traveller would get the worst of the affair, and I do not know what it was that all at once inspired me with the absurd story which I invented to help him out of his difficulty.

"Let them mind what they are about," I whispered to Roggefled, who stood next to me; "I am not mistaken; the tall man in the red cloak is Czar Peter of Russia."

"You don't say so, eh?" said Roggefled, staring at the stranger in amazement. "Well, well! you don't mean that now? In that case" . . .

And he forthwith proceeded to tell the tale to his neighbour, which he had no sooner done but it was repeated from mouth to mouth.

The invention was the readier believed as, a few years since, the Czar had travelled to Amsterdam incognito and without any suite. Besides, the stranger's tall stature, his authoritative tone, and even the manner in which he had laid about him, did somewhat answer to the popular idea formed of the Russian monarch.

I was curious to observe the effect produced by my information. All the hats and caps of the peasants were raised as if by magic, and they stood staring at the traveller in mute wonder. The landlord was especially effusive, and by dint of numerous courtesies tried to make him forget that he had taken the part of his antagonist.

Andrew himself, who, judging from his expression, appeared to be rather sceptical on the point, dared not

renew the attack, but remained irresolutely standing in the centre, alternately casting a sullen glance at the supposed Czar and at the bystanders.

There was one person, however, who could make nothing of the whole affair, and that was the stranger himself. He wondered at the sudden civility of all, and looked at every one in turns, until his eye met the smile which played about my mouth at the success of my stratagem.

I understood his inquiring look ; I approached him, hat in hand, made a movement as if about to assist him to his carriage, and whispered in his ear—

“ They take you here for the Czar—move away as soon as you can.”

“ Thank you,” said he as he mounted the cart. “ Go on, coachman ! ”

The driver leaped on the box, smacked his whip, and with more speed than I had given it credit for the horse pulled its burden along the sandy ground.

The whole assemblage remained staring at the retreating carriage in mute wonder, until the host broke the silence, exclaiming—

“ Well, what do you think of that now ? Fancy, that red cloak should be the Czar ! ”

At length I resolved to continue my long-delayed journey, and hurried away with quick steps on the Naarden road.

II.

NOTHING remarkable occurred to me during the first stage of my walk. After an hour's progress I began to feel the urgent necessity of again finding an inn or some equally convenient resting-place; not that I cared either for refreshment or rest, but because the state of the sky and atmosphere filled me with grave apprehension. Soon the deathlike calm which had prevailed until then was disturbed by a furious whirlwind, which suddenly came sweeping along from the depths of the forest. At the same moment a lurid flash of lightning, immediately followed by a rattling peal of thunder, the presage of the strife of the elements, proclaimed that now, indeed, the storm had broken loose in terrible earnest. At its commencement I set off at a sharp running gait, hoping soon to reach a place of shelter; but as I proceeded the whole road became one mass of soft, pulpy quagmire, and my boots once being saturated, I ran and splashed through thick and thin, setting aside all thoughts except that of getting farther on my way.

At length, in turning round a corner I came upon an extensive country-seat. Present circumstances did not allow of my taking a thorough survey of the place, but from what I could judge at a hasty glance I came to a most favourable conclusion as to the wealth and good

taste of its owner. But what with my weather-beaten travelling costume, and soaked and dripping wet as I was, I felt ashamed to enter such fashionable quarters.

To my great relief I saw close by another building of great elegance, apparently some supplementary summer-house, and thither I proceeded. I ascended some marble steps and found a door standing *ajar*; without hesitation I thoroughly wiped and scraped my boots free from their load of mud and entered. Scarcely had I done so when I discovered that I was not alone.

On a garden-chair, half concealed behind a curtain, sat a young girl, whom, it appeared, I had disturbed in reading. The first thing that I observed was that she was attired in a white morning dress, which displayed to great advantage her slender shape; whilst her small head and face were most captivating. She also seemed anything but charmed at my unmannerly intrusion.

However, I could not help remarking the inferiority of young men under such circumstances to the youth of the weaker sex in instinctive good manners, owing to the fact, no doubt, that women are gifted with keener perceptive faculties, and therefore sooner recover their presence of mind than our noble selves. As for myself, I cut a most foolish figure. Blushing, and, as it were, transfixed to the spot, I stood behind a large table, placed between us, ejaculating some disconnected words of apology about the bad weather and about my regret at having disturbed her.

Then, continually moving backwards, I took up my hat, which I had thrown down on the floor, and announced that I would no longer intrude, but depart immediately.

"Sir!" said she, "you do not disturb me at all, and it is really such fearful weather that one may well set aside all ceremonies."

I made a low and somewhat awkward bow, and it seemed as if my ridiculous attitude brought back her good-humour, for her features lightened up, and with a cordial smile she continued—

"I have really no authority in this summer-house, but my uncle will not blame me if I usurp his rights for a moment and offer you a temporary shelter."

I was beginning again to sum up courage, and at these friendly words my bashfulness was completely gone.

"The weather is so bad," said I, "that I will avail myself of your kindness with pleasure." I made another bow, less awkward than the first, laid hat, stick, and bundle aside, and remained at the same respectful distance.

The young girl asked if I would not sit down, once more took up her book and continued reading, without taking any further notice of me. I complied, and thus sat for some time, during which the moments seemed so many hours. It is true, I might have agreeably occupied myself in the contemplation of the delicately-shaped nose, the charming little dimpled cheek, and the fresh, ruddy lips, which adorned her captivating face, but I thought that politeness forbade me to sit constantly staring at her. I therefore contented myself with now and then casting a look out of the window, to see whether the rain did not leave off, a prospect still very unlikely to be realised, and with taking observation of the interior of the summer-house, which was built, decorated, and furnished with a noble and artistic simplicity.

But this, too, was a monotonous pastime, and whenever I cast a sidelong glance at my pretty hostess, I noticed that she occasionally lifted her eyes from her book to look at the weather, which I could not help ascribing to a desire to get rid of me. My position now became so unendurable, that I rose and in a tone which belied my words remarked, "I believe that the storm is almost over, so I shall leave you, with many thanks."

"I think you had better wait until the rain ceases," said she, lifting her bright blue eyes at the dark clouds above. "It is really not quite the weather for walking."

At this moment a most terrific clattering of rain against the window appeared to confirm her words.

"You are very kind, miss," I replied; "but I was in hopes of entering Naarden before the closing of the town gates, and it is getting rather late."

She did not answer; I saw that she wished to evade all conversation with one who was an utter stranger to her.

"I am afraid," I continued, somewhat piqued, "that the corn will suffer much from this weather?"

The corn did not appear to be a subject which she took very much at heart, for she was still silent.

"I pity the poor fishermen in the Zuider Zee," said I, thinking that if she possessed the least feeling she could not leave my remark unanswered; but, no, she bit her lip and looked into her book.

"This seems to be a beautiful seat; I have seldom seen finer trees than those beeches."

Again no answer.

"The deuce," thought I, "is this affectation, pride, or want of intellect?" And yet I could not much blame her for not wishing to enter into familiar conversation with a man who had all the appearance of a tramp. However,

wishing to discover whether a pretty face was the only gift Nature had bestowed upon her, I determined to alter my style of conversation, and with some abruptness I asked her if she could kindly tell me whether the villa belonged to a Mr. Blaek of Amsterdam.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Blaek is my uncle," she replied in a tone of icy coolness; but I was determined to continue the attack with the same weapons.

"I am very pleased to hear it," said I. "I do not recollect ever having seen Mr. Blaek."

At this she surveyed me with evident surprise, as though she wished to signify that she could not interpret my words, but that, for the rest, it was a matter of utter indifference to her whether I knew her uncle or not.

"But I have sometimes met Mr. Blaek's brother at my father's house — Henry Blaek, if I remember rightly."

"He was my father," said the young girl, her features suddenly clouded by an expression of sadness. "I was unfortunate enough to lose him twelve years ago."

"It is true," said I; "I am speaking of the time when I was still a boy. Mr. Blaek sometimes visited my father, who is at present high bailiff of Amsterdam."

"Is Mr. Huyck your father?" said Miss Blaek with sudden cordiality. "I know him very well; as well as your mother and your sister. It is only a fortnight since that I saw them all, and I hope soon to see them again, as we are going to Amsterdam to-morrow."

"They are quite well, I hope?"

"Perfectly well," she replied, and, laying her book aside, she continued quite unreserved: "they were very anxious to see you again; you are expected every moment, I assure you."

The ice was now broken, and we spent an hour in a most agreeable chat, during which I had frequent opportunities of admiring the good sense and amiability of my fair hostess.

All at once the sound of a bell ringing loud and shrill, disturbed us.

"There's the dinner-bell; now I shall have to run out, rain or no rain."

"But, in the name of Heaven, are there any barbarians living in this villa," I asked, "as no one is polite enough to fetch you?"

"I dare not stop longer," said the young girl with evident confusion, and, having put back her book, she took up her work, but in so doing her ball of thread escaped her and rolled under the table. I stooped to pick it up, when all at once the exclamation "Found! found!" struck upon my ears, and I saw three strange faces peering in at the window.

III.

THE position in which Miss Blaek and I found ourselves on the entry of these three personages, did really offer as nice a little incident as may be produced on any stage in the dramatic world.

Imagine, for a moment, on the one side myself, in a very dirty attire, my appearance not very much improved by the rain, creeping on all fours under the table to pick up Miss Blaek's ball of worsted, whilst the lady lifted up her little golden-haired head, and, recognising the visitors, stood, with downcast eyes and crimson cheeks, like one caught in some guilty act; and on the other hand the three new arrivals, astounded and perplexed on the threshold, staring at this scene, probably suspecting that there was something wrong, and that Miss Blaek had a lover whom she tried to hide under the table. And in order that any one who may feel inclined to immortalise this episode on canvas may not want for the necessary details, I will now add a description of the three individuals who came so unexpectedly to disturb our *tête-à-tête*.

The foremost of them was none else than the owner of the villa, Mr. James Blaek, a middle-aged man, of an unhealthy appearance, with a complexion closely approaching in colour a glass of Amsterdam canal-water.

The furrows which marked his brow, the sickly expression of his sunken eyes, the protruding chin and bony cheeks, and the absence of most of his teeth, gave him the appearance of a worn-out octogenarian, although he was really not older than fifty-three. His attitude was calm and dignified, and his whole appearance seemed the essence of respectability.

On his right stood his only son, Louis Blaek, a tall, well-built young man, with large brown eyes, well-shaped mouth, and regular features. His appearance would have been highly favourable, but for a habit which he had of twitching his nose and lower lip, that spoke of pride and scornfulness, and for a few red spots on his sallow cheeks, which plainly testified that he had been present at a goodly number of nocturnal revels.

The third personage was Lucas Helling, who filled the honourable post of poet to the Blaek family. It was very apparent that he was merely tolerated by the two former gentlemen, and that he was very far from possessing that vaunted freedom which is supposed to be the inheritance of the followers of the Muses; in fact, that his position was the reverse of a manly and an independent one. And this is easily explained. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the generality of the Amsterdam aristocracy, far from paying to poetry that unconscious and instinctive homage to which she is entitled as a faithful champion of the true and the beautiful, patronised the poetical literature of the day because it was fashionable to do so. Poets of the very highest orders were therefore compelled to degrade their divine gifts, and to render them subservient to the foolish whims and highfown fancies of those who possessed money in the place of wit, culture, and a feeling

for the beautiful. The poet who, at that time, ventured to soar into lofty spheres, was sure to feel the stings of contempt and poverty.

Such was the fate of Lucas Helling, who was patronised by Mr. Blaek, not because that gentleman had the least poetic feeling, but simply because Helling's talents had been recommended to him for immortalising the beauties of his villa of Guldenhof.

Although the outward appearance of the poet betokened his unacquaintance with the luxuries of life, his open features, small sparkling eyes, and smiling lips were evidences of a good and happy temper which the deepest misery alone could conquer.

The astonishment depicted on the features of the trio offered an amusing and striking contrast. With the old gentleman it was mingled with an expression of alarm and anger, as he stood open-mouthed, convulsively clutching the knob of his cane. His son tossed his head backwards and knitted his eyebrows; while on Helling's lips arose a smile which he hastily hid with his hand, not knowing whether a jest would be thought appropriate on the present occasion.

The silence did not last long however; the three gentlemen came forward, preceded by their dogs, which at once ran barking and growling at the unlucky intruder, who, with the ball of thread in his hand, had now started to his feet from under the table.

"We came to fetch you, Harriet," said Mr. Blaek, with an air of dissatisfaction, and without taking the slightest notice of me; "nobody knew where you had run to."

"I was . . . I was reading here, uncle," replied the charming girl, blushing and turning pale by turns. "It was raining so fast. . . ."

"We were afraid you might feel lonely," said Louis Blaek, with a sneering laugh, at the same time throwing me a sidelong glance; "but we did not know that you had company."

Wishing to help my pretty hostess out of her confusion, I now stepped forward, and remarked that Mr. Blaek would no doubt pardon me for having taken shelter from the rain at his villa.

"It is written over the door," muttered Helding to himself—

"Are you afraid of rain or of the bleak east wind?
You will in this abode a pleasant refuge find."

"I suppose," added Louis Blaek, with a sneer, "you were afraid that the roof was leaky, and you thought you were only safe from the rain under the table."

"I picked up the thread which the young lady had dropped," said I, as coolly as possible.

"And did my niece invite you to take shelter here, my lad?" asked Mr. Blaek rather peevishly. "This is a private house, you know," he continued; "not a roadside inn, where everybody can run in and out as he likes."

"The young lady was kind enough not to drive me away; moreover, the terrific weather is my excuse for any intrusion on my part. My name is . . ."

"I do not ask you for your name," interrupted the old gentleman; "but the weather has much improved now so you might as well march, my lad."

This wish, or rather command, was not to be disobeyed. I approached Miss Blaek, and, thanking her for her kind reception, I asked her if she had any messages for Amsterdam.

"No, thank you, Mr. Huyck," said she, dwelling with particular emphasis on my name. "I shall very likely come up to Amsterdam myself in a few days, when I hope to see your mother and Susan."

At these words the three men stared with astonishment, and a somewhat prolonged pause ensued.

"Is this gentleman an acquaintance of yours, Harriet?" asked Louis. "Why did you not say so at once, young lady? Father was already half afraid that he belonged to the band of Black Peter."

"Huyck! Huyck!" repeated Mr. Blaek, looking at his niece and at myself in turns. "Are you any relation to a magistrate of that name, sir?"

"I am his son," I replied with a bow.

"I was not aware that you were acquainted with my niece, sir. You have been abroad, I believe. . . . otherwise you would know that it is not usual in Holland for young ladies when they are alone to receive visits from gentlemen?"

"I have been travelling," said I, somewhat piqued, "and I saw Miss Blaek for the first time to-day. I was not aware that there was any one in the summer-house where I took shelter from the rain, or I should not have been so intrusive."

It seemed as if this explanation had helped to lift a load off Mr. Blaek's heart; and, wishing to make amends for his rudeness, he invited me to step inside and take some refreshment. I declined, as I was desirous of continuing my journey.

"Well, you can light a pipe, then, before you go," said Mr. Blaek. "I daresay Louis has some tobacco with him."

"I have forgotten my tinder," said Louis with indifference.

"I have left off smoking abroad," said I ; and wishing the company good-day, I retired.

The storm being now quite over I pursued my way without any further delay, and for a long while my thoughts unconsciously dwelt on the fascinating person and manners of the fair Harriet Blaek, whilst the most conflicting ideas were occupying my mind. At first I was in ecstasy with my new acquaintance, then I reproached myself with having cut a foolish figure before her, and then again those ideas gave way to a feeling of indifference, which, however, soon passed away. But these thoughts did not leave me until, wet to the skin and very hungry, I stopped at an inn at Eemnes, where I intended to dine.

IV.

WHILE my dinner was being prepared, I entered a little private room, and amused myself with looking out of the window. The view did really interest me but very little ; I kept my eyes fixed on the meadows and on the green hedges until I discovered that I had unconsciously marked an H. and a B. with my finger on the dirty pane.

I quickly wiped the letters, as if afraid that any one would read them and discover my secret, when all at once I saw a figure approaching from the fields, in whom I immediately recognised the identical Andrew who had made such a disturbance at Zoest.

I already congratulated myself that I had not been overtaken on the road by this annoying fellow, when, to my disgust, I noticed that our sailor friend made straightway for the door of the inn and entered. I thanked my good fortune that I had a room to myself.

Soon after this the landlady came in with some cold meat, bread, and beer. I told her that this morning I had had a little quarrel with the man below, and as I did not wish to have anything further to do with him, I asked her to let me know when Andrew should be gone, as I did not wish for his company on the road. I then sat down and began a fierce onslaught on the bread and meat.

About half an hour after I had finished my meal I heard some noise below, and, approaching the window, I soon observed Andrew leave the inn, accompanied by another man who appeared to be better dressed than he. I stayed a few minutes longer in order to allow them time to get ahead of me; and then having paid for my refreshment, I went out.

I had proceeded a good distance, when, on ascending a hill on the other side of the pretty village of Laren, I saw a vehicle coming down from the heights, which on a closer inspection I recognised as the tilt-cart that had attracted my attention at Zoest in the morning, and which was now returning empty.

Notwithstanding my anxiety to get farther, I could not help calling to the driver, who was half dozing on the box, to stop for a moment, and I asked him where he had left the gentleman with the red cloak.

"I don't know where he has got to," he answered; "I put him down this side of Naarden, on a spot where there wasn't a house nor a pathway. Where he was going to, Heaven knows; I think it looks a bit suspicious, he seemed to be afraid of being seen. But what has that to do with me? He give me a good fare, and so I have got nothing to say."

With these words he recommenced his drive, but in going he called out to me—

"You'd better be on your guard, governor; because I don't think it's all right outside Naarden. I heard a good deal o' whistling going on in the forest, and I was glad I got to the highroad again."

The cart rode away, and I walked on, not overpleased at the information which I had received. I tried to reassure myself with the idea that no one would

dare to attack a man in broad daylight and so near a town; and, besides, neither my luggage nor my dress were of such a character as to offer much temptation to a robber; but the idea that I might be attacked was far from pleasant.

Being determined to reach Naarden in time, I once more hurried onward, and in so doing I came to a spot where I observed fresh marks of wheels in the soft and sandy ground, and probably the identical tilt-cart had turned round there. This would not so much have attracted my attention but, just at this spot, I saw something lying on the gravel, which, on closer inspection, I discovered to be a green purse. I picked it up, and stood still for some moments undecided what to do. Probably the purse, which seemed to be well filled, belonged to the person who had been riding in the cart; but how was it to be returned to the owner? The driver was a stranger to me, and he himself knew nothing whatever of his passenger.

Whilst reflecting as to what was the best course to pursue, I opened the purse in order to see whether I could find any clue as to its owner. It contained a round sum in gold and a gold signet-ring with a handsome stone, on which a coat of arms was very artistically engraved. Putting the money back into the purse, I concentrated all my attention on the crest, thinking that it might assist me in solving the mystery; but scarcely had I observed that it consisted of a St. Andrew's cross, encircled with numerous ornaments, when all at once I heard a whistle and a rustling of foliage as if some one was making his way through the thickets. I turned round in alarm and saw a man approaching, who called out to me to let him have a share in my prize.

My terror increased as I recognised Andrew Mathissen. I felt at once that it was only by showing him a determined front that I could possibly keep him off, and, gripping my stick firmly, I looked him straight in the face and asked him what he wanted.

"What I want!" he repeated with a sneering laugh; "well, only as much as I have a right to. I saw this purse as soon as you, and I was just going to pocket it when you picked it up; you must not think that it is only you who has a right to go on the spree with these yellow boys; I want them just as much as you do."

"All this may be true or not," said I; "but what I have found belongs neither to you nor to me, and I intend to return it to the rightful owner."

"So, so!" said Andrew; "well, now, that is a nice thing. But do you think I don't know your tricks? You want to make sail with the whole cargo, but that won't do; you shall tip up, mate, or we'll run you in."

With this he whistled a second time.

I now felt convinced that Andrew was not only a ruffian but a highwayman to boot, and that I must get rid of him before he could get assistance; I lifted up my stick and gave him a sound blow on his outstretched hands, on which I took to my heels as fast as my legs could carry me. But my flight was of no use, for scarcely had I gone a few steps when two other fellows sprang forward, and while one cut off my retreat, the other grasped me by the collar.

"Look out, Haentje! that he don't cut it," hallooed Andrew, rushing forward; "he must bleed for it now."

"Don't move or this will go through you," said Haentje, in whom I recognised the man with whom

Andrew had left Eemnes ; and at the same time he pressed a knife to my throat.

"Come, governor," said the third robber, very coolly producing a pistol, which he presented at me, "be advised ; all resistance is in vain ; hand us all you have about you in gold and silver, and you'll be able to walk all the easier for it."

While he spoke I looked at the man for a moment. He had a very favourable appearance, in striking contrast to Andrew and to the roguish face of Haentje. His complexion was somewhat sunburnt, but his features were regular and pleasing ; his black eyes sparkled with animation, and raven locks clustered gracefully round his forehead. From his dress, which consisted of a fine black frock-coat and trousers, no one would have suspected him to be a highwayman.

I saw that all resistance was useless.

"If it must be," said I, "take all I have ; to violence I must yield."

"There ! that's what I call sensible," said the man with the black coat in a friendly, half-patronising tone ; "and as you don't seem to be rich yourself, we shall be reasonable, and leave you something to go and have a drop at Naarden to drown the fright."

"Not rich," repeated Andrew ; "only just now he came cruising along our own coasts and picked up a purse full of gold. I warned him this morning not to come in my way again ; and now would you let him go, Peter ?"

These words filled me with fresh alarm, and I trembled when I saw the robber frown, and then heard him say, in a curt, authoritative tone—

"Do you know him ? Take him into the forest."

This command was scarcely given when the scoundrels lifted me up and dragged me along through the copse.

I felt my blood grow cold in my veins, for what other object could they have in taking me into the wood but to strip and murder me? At all events, I firmly resolved to sell my life most dearly, and to make use of any means of escape which stratagem or violence might offer.

For the moment, however, resistance was useless, for I still felt the cold steel on my throat and the muzzle of a pistol on my breast; but as we gradually penetrated deeper into the forest, the robbers were obliged to loosen their hold for a moment, for Haentje had to cut away a bough which was in his way, and the other man to detach his cap, which had become entangled in some bushes. I seized the opportunity, leapt to my feet, tore myself away from Andrew, who still had hold of me, turned round, sprang over the bushes which were in my way, and made off as fast as I could to gain the highroad. But it seemed that I had taken a wrong path, and I soon found myself on a small open patch of grass, almost simultaneously with the three fellows, who rushed after me, uttering the wildest imprecations.

My strength was exhausted; I saw that I would soon be overtaken, and I turned back in despair.

"Don't venture to approach me," I cried, brandishing my stick.

My determined attitude appeared somewhat to intimidate the rascals. He who seemed to be the chief of the band pulled the trigger of his pistol.

"Enough of that nonsense," said he, taking aim at me; "stop, or I shall fire."

" You had better be careful," I replied ; " the sleuth-hounds of the law are on your track."

" Never mind, we'll put an end to you," continued the man in the black coat, putting back his pistol as he spoke, and producing a small rapier from under his clothes. He then took off his coat, and marched straight up to me with the naked steel in his hand. I defended myself with my stick for a while, all the time crying—

" Murder ! murder ! thieves ! "

But the fellow who bore the name of Haentje at length succeeded in getting hold of my arm as I was about to parry a blow, and at the same time I felt Andrew snatch me by the legs and lift me off my feet. I fell forward, and thought that all was over with me, when all at once I heard a heavy blow resound upon the head of one of my foes, and saw Andrew fall down on the grass. I sprang to my feet, and beheld the stranger in the red cloak, standing with uplifted hand at my side. He wore no arms, yet his gigantic form, the abruptness of his appearance, and the determined manner with which he had made Andrew feel the strength of his arm, seemed to have struck the robbers with terror, and for some time they stood as if rooted to the ground. But they soon again summoned up courage, and while Haentje picked up his knife which he had dropped in the struggle, the chief approached my defender with uplifted sword.

" Well, Black Peter, have you forgotten me ? " asked the latter, as he stood unmoved, looking him straight in the face.

" Is it possible ! " exclaimed Black Peter with astonishment, as he lowered his rapier and hastily took off his hat ; " can it be you, captain, or is it your ghost ? "

"Is this your occupation at present?" exclaimed the man in the red cloak reproachfully. "Could I expect this from one who has served under me?"

"Well, captain," said Black Peter humbly, and turning his hat round in his hands. "What can I say? These are bad times, and . . ."

"Not another word," interrupted the stranger. "Mind that the whole three of you leave the neighbourhood of Naarden before dusk, or you'll not escape the gallows, I promise you."

The robber silently donned his hat once more, sheathed his rapier, put on his coat, and ordered Andrew to follow him.

"Hang it!" Matthisen cried, casting on the stranger and myself a look of fury, "are we to strike our flag without giving these vagabonds their dues?"

"I cannot understand it," said Haentje, staring at his chief in astonishment.

"You cannot understand it? . . . You need not understand it, you stupid donkeys," answered Black Peter with an air of supreme contempt. "You see that gentleman. Well, if he ordered me to hang both of you, I would do it. Conie! come! no nonsense; you know where to find me again. And now be off, or I'll teach you a lesson!"

Although the two rogues had a much more formidable appearance than their chief, they seemed to have as much respect for his moral influence, as he, on his part, appeared to possess for the stranger; and, grumbling and scowling, they retired into the forest and were soon lost from view.

"Is there anything I can do for you, captain?" inquired the robber, as soon as they were gone, courteously approaching the stranger.

The latter simply shook his head.

"If you should require my services," Peter continued, "you can always obtain my address at Mike Kater's, in the Duivelshoek, at Amsterdam."

Here he suddenly stopped short, and gave me a menacing look—

"I have nicely betrayed myself," he exclaimed; "but I caution you to be on your guard, sir."

"I'll manage that," said my deliverer. "Be off now, and you'll have nothing to fear."

The robber made a bow, and, with a smile of satisfaction on his features, he quickly retired.

V.

I WAS astounded, and could not account for the relations existing between my benefactor and the chief of the robbers. Perhaps the awe-inspiring stranger had once been the head of a more formidable band? May be this was the clue to the appellation of captain which Black Peter gave him. However, I felt a sort of respect for the man who, unarmed, and by the mere force of his will, had saved me from the hands of three ruffians; and after an interval of silence I began to tender him my warmest thanks.

He curtly interrupted me—

“Pardon me,” he said, “I have no time at present to listen to all the nice things which you are going to say. I have lost something on the road, and I must go and look for it; for it is something that is in everybody’s line . . .”

“Was it a green purse!” I exclaimed.

“Have you found it?”

“It contained gold, captain,” I continued, “and besides . . .”

“A signet-ring,” said he, finishing the sentence.

I handed him the purse, glad to have an opportunity of rendering him a service in my turn.

“You have indeed done me an important service. To judge from your appearance and your language, you

seem to belong to the upper classes of society, and perhaps I would offend you if I offered you anything. But as your dress does not betoken much wealth, pray pardon me if I give you a little present for your trouble," and, as he spoke, he held out to me two or three pieces of gold.

I thanked him, and informed him that I was the son of Mr. Huyck, the high bailiff of Amsterdam.

"Indeed," said he, whilst a cloud darkened his brow, "the son of a high bailiff should be the very last person to venture alone on an unsafe road."

I asked him if he had any objection to accompany me to Naarden, as I should like to inform the authorities of my encounter.

"Now you speak like a true son of a high bailiff," said the stranger with an affected laugh; "but as for me, I feel no inclination to go and cry myself hoarse, and to stand wasting half-an-hour at each street corner until it suits a policeman to come on his beat, with the pleasant prospect of spending half the night in a watchhouse, and be subjected to all sorts of stupid examinations. Dash it all, let Black Peter and his band get themselves hanged elsewhere; I am not going to twist the rope for them. You can do as you please; but if you will take my advice, and wish to do me a favour, do not go to Naarden at present; but if you can content yourself with the humble hospitality which I have to offer, I shall be very glad if you will stay with me for the night."

I could not help wondering at this strange invitation, as I failed to reconcile this apparent frankness with the mystery in which his words had hitherto been wrapt. But I did not quite relish the idea of journeying alone

in the dark, at the risk of a second encounter with the robbers ; and, besides, I felt some curiosity to know who my deliverer might be, so I accepted his offer, and trusted that I would cause him no inconvenience.

I followed him along a narrow path, which in a short time brought us to a causeway so drenched with the recent rain that we crossed it with the greatest difficulty. When we had been splashing along for a little while, through mud and mire, my guide said—

“ May I ask why you gave me the title of captain just now ? ”

“ I heard one of those fellows call you so,” I replied.

“ That’s probable enough,” he answered with a sneer ; “ but if those fools give ~~me~~ such a name, a sensible young fellow like you ought not to follow their example. I have as little claim to that title as to that of Czar, with which you honoured me this morning. My name is simply Bos, at least for the present.”

I followed my guide in silence, and thought that the muddy road would never come to an end ; but at length we arrived at a small rustic turnstile, through which we passed. We now came upon a sort of kitchen garden, which was in front of a farmhouse.

This appeared to be our destination. A little dog, which lay chained in the garden, began barking, the front door opened, a female draped in black came forward, and in a whisper asked—

“ Is it you, father ? ”

“ Hush ! hush ! I am not alone . . . this way, sir . . . Where is old Martha ? ”

“ She is getting supper ready,” answered the daughter.

“ All right. Show the gentleman upstairs ; he will stay

to-night. I am going to make arrangements with Martha for his sleeping here."

He entered a sort of kitchen, where I could see an old woman busy baking cakes, and closed the door behind him, leaving me alone with his daughter. The girl looked with surprise after the retreating form of her father, and then gazed at me anxiously.

I felt that common courtesy demanded some apology.

"I ain afraid that I may cause some inconvenience here, Miss Bos, but your father wished . . ."

"What my father wishes must be done," she replied in a firm voice, and with a slight curtsey; "be kind enough to follow me."

She conducted me upstairs into a small apartment and asked me to sit down. I did so, with my mind so full of the recollection of the strange adventures of the day that I hardly knew whether I was awake or dreaming. But in the meantime I thought it my duty to tell my fair guide that her father had saved my life, and was just about to relate my whole adventure when I reflected that he might perhaps not approve of it, and I simply said that he would doubtless tell her in what way he had earned my gratitude.

Evidently observing that I did not want to enlighten her any further, she replied—

"My father will soon be here. Allow me to leave you alone for a moment, while I go and see whether I can give him any assistance."

With these words she retired, bolting the door behind her.

The young girl remained absent for a long while, and I must confess that I had my misgivings as to the reason

why she had so carefully bolted the door of my little room.

Wishing, however, to turn my ideas into another channel, I began to look about me in the apartment which I now considered my prison. An old, small, worm-eaten walnut cabinet, upon which stood three china vases, one of which held a bouquet of faded jasmines, a small table covered with baize, and three common wooden chairs, comprised all the furniture with which the place was adorned. Dusk began to fall, and, feeling somewhat uneasy, I was about to try and open the door, when I heard a light step on the stairs. The door was unbolted and my host's daughter stood before me.

"My father has told me everything," she began, and as she spoke a tremor was in her voice, "and we owe you some gratitude; but sit down, sir, I think you have not yet recovered your composure."

"Indeed," I replied, "I am not ashamed to confess that the attack upon my life has somewhat upset me."

"That is quite natural—at least," she added, with tearful eyes, "when one is not used to such distressing scenes; but one gets accustomed to everything."

Rather surprised, and hoping to obtain a clue to the mystery which was enveloping me, I asked her if anything similar had ever happened to her.

"I have met with sad adventures of various kinds," she replied, in a distressing tone, "but," she added, "my father smiled when he told me of the comical stratagem by which you saved him from annoyance this morning. He has not smiled for years."

"He appears to have met with numerous vicissitudes," said I.

"Would to Heaven that they were all things of the past!"

She said no more, and, turning aside, wiped away a tear.

Though I hesitated to break the silence, observing the extreme distress of mind under which she laboured, I thought that it might be impolite on my part not to renew the conversation, so I asked her if the farmhouse where we were was her usual abode.

"Alas! sir," she answered, in a tone that went to my heart, "we have no abode which we may call our own."

"In that case I am the more sensible of the inconvenience which I am causing you by my presence."

"Pardon me, my father has already told you, I believe, that the inconvenience is trifling. I am convinced that he would not have brought you here if he had not thought it desirable for our own safety that he should do so."

This was the very thing of which I also felt convinced; still I thought it somewhat strange to hear such a frank confession from her mouth.

"I very much regret," said I, "that your words confirm me in a suspicion which I had hitherto thought unworthy of your father, and that he could suspect me of betraying him."

"Of betraying him!" she repeated, her eyes burning with indignation, "do you think that if he had thought you capable of it, he would have brought you here of his own free-will, and thus made you acquainted with his place of refuge? What do you know about him that you could betray him? . . . but, pardon me, sir, I am a simple girl, and should not speak of matters about which I had better be silent. You will not take advantage of an ex-

pression which unconsciously escaped me. One word from you would be the ruin, not only of ourselves, but also of the poor woman who lives in this farmhouse. Promise me that you will respect the laws of hospitality, and that I may trust you."

I was touched and astounded at this strange appeal.

"You are right, miss," said I; "even if I wanted to betray you or your father, I could not do so, as I do not know anything about you; and would not disclose what I may have observed, if it were against the wishes of him who has saved my life."

At this juncture Mr. Bos entered the room. He had doffed his red cloak, and was now dressed in the simple garb of a country gentleman.

"I trust you will excuse me if I have kept you waiting; I had something to do downstairs. My daughter, I hope, has not let you want for anything."

"I do not know what I could require for the moment," said I, "except, perhaps, some means of cleaning the mud and dirt of the road from my clothes and person."

"Fetch some water, Amelia," said Mr. Bos; "and a clothes-brush, if there is such a thing here . . . Oh, how can I be so stupid? I have one in my pocket."

The young girl left the room, and I began to brush away the mud with the pocket-brush which Mr. Bos had handed to me. Whilst doing this, something shining on the back of the brush caught my eye. I saw that it was a little brass plate, on which was engraved the same coat of arms which I had seen on the ring. My glance did not escape my host's attention, and seemed to cause him some annoyance; for, as soon as his daughter returned with a basin and water, he took up the brush, looked at it, and gave it her, telling her to burn it at once.

"That brush, papa, which you have used for so many years!" she exclaimed in astonishment.

"Yes. I find it hard to part with an old servant, though it be but a brush; but we must keep nothing that could betray us. Go, my child, and do as I tell you; you can stay and help Martha a little. I have something to say to this gentleman."

Amelia sighed and left the room, keeping her eyes fixed on the brush which she held in her hand.

"She does not like the idea of burning it," said her father, "and I can well understand it, for it grieves me too. You may call it childish; but we feel a certain attachment for objects which we have long used. There is something unpleasant in losing them, and it is particularly so when circumstances force us to destroy them; . . . but enough of this. As soon as you have sufficiently recovered and are comfortable, I should like a moment's interview."

I desired nothing better; for now I hoped to see the mystery cleared up, in which the actions and words of father and daughter had hitherto been wrapt, so I soon seated myself opposite Mr. Bos to hear what he had to say.

VI.

"I AM convinced, Mr. Huyck," said my mysterious friend, after a short silence, "that you have formed some strange conjectures concerning me and my identity during the last two hours. But I regret that my own safety forbids me to satisfy your curiosity to its fullest extent."

I felt rather disconcerted at this introduction, for now I remained just as wise as before. "What the deuce can the fellow want of me?" thought I. "If he has nothing else to tell me, why these elaborate preparations?"

"Sir," said I, "I respect your secret, and do not wish to know anything about it, if you think it advisable not to enlighten me."

"Well, let us get to business," he resumed; "for I have asked for this interview, not because I merely wanted to inform you that I will tell you nothing, but to beg of you to render me two services."

"I am prepared to render you any service which may not be beyond my power or interfere with my duty."

"That is a most prudent and praiseworthy restriction," said Mr. Bos. "What a pity it is that one can widen the sphere of duty to such a great extent, if needs be; but we shall see what you think of my requests. In the first place, then, I should esteem it a favour if you would mention to no one your encounter at Zoest this

morning, or the affair with Black Peter and his mates, or your night's stay here."

I replied that I would do as he asked, provided he allowed me only to tell my father of my adventures. At this he was greatly disconcerted, saying that it was just the very thing above all that he wished to avoid, and that if my father were made acquainted with the affair it would inevitably cause his utter ruin and that of his beloved daughter. It was painful to me to disguise anything from my father; but Mr. Bos spoke with such fervour, and dwelt with so much emphasis on this subject as a matter of life or death to them both, that I consented to be silent, stating, however, that in the event of his falling into the clutches of the law, I would mention the details of the occurrence to my father, who might thereby be induced to form a more favourable opinion of him.

"This condition is so reasonable," said Mr. Bos, "that I not only approve of it, but, in the event of ultimately finding myself out of danger—of which I shall duly apprise you—I authorise you to give him every information. This being settled, I now proceed to my second request. From what I have already said," he continued, "I need not tell you that I cannot show myself in Amsterdam without the risk of being caught in a snare set for me. This may be a matter of indifference for myself, but I cannot keep my poor daughter with me; she must not share my wandering life, for her presence can only imperil the secrecy of my place of refuge. A certain Mr. Bouvelt, a notary at Amsterdam, will allow her to reside with him, and pass her off as his niece. Once there, I need no longer have any anxiety about her. But the great difficulty is, how is she to get to Amster-

dain? I know very well that there are plenty of canal-barges and vehicles going to the city, but I know also that all coachmen and bargemen are obliged to give notice to the high bailiff of the doings of all suspected passengers."

"A young lady like your daughter cannot very well be ranged under such a category," said I.

"You are mistaken. I am certain that my arrival is expected, and that spies are lying in wait for me at Zoest and Eemnes, who know that my daughter is with me. If they see a young lady answering to the descriptions given of Amelia travel alone from Naarden to Amsterdam, they'll begin a further inquiry. No, my child must not be exposed to any danger, and this is why I ask you to take her under your protection on the journey."

"Sir," I replied, "I think it, of course, a great honour and pleasure to accompany your daughter on her journey; but have you not reflected that I am really the least fitting person to act as her protector? If my father should hear of my arriving at Amsterdam with a young lady, it will arouse the very suspicions which you wish to avoid."

"I see," said Mr. Bos discontentedly, "you Amsterdam folks are all alike. You always have a hundred reasons to give when there is anything to be done that does not quite agree with your usual ways of thinking and doing. Rather say at once that you refuse, and then there is an end of the matter."

"Pardon me, sir; as far as I am concerned, I'll accompany your daughter with pleasure, without taking any notice of what slanderous tongues may perhaps say of me; but . . ."

"Slanderous tongues!" exclaimed Bos, with a bitter laugh, starting from his seat. "Who has most reason to fear them, my daughter or you? If slander must attach itself to either of you, it is against her that its shafts will be directed. What! A father puts sufficient faith in you to place his only treasure, his virtuous, innocent daughter under your care, and you think that this may damage your reputation? Or do you imagine, because I may not show myself in public, that you have the right to look upon my daughter as an outcast, a leper whose company is contagious? Sir, wretched as I am, you have cruelly, bitterly wounded me as well as my innocent and beloved Amelia. It may be the fashion to act thus among your formal Amsterdam patricians, but as for me, when any one asks me to do him a service, I say 'yes' or 'no,' but do not bring forward all kinds of trumped-up objections."

"Sir," said I when this storm of words was over, "you mistake me. I had no intention, either by word or thought, to offend you. What regards the risk of my as yet unsullied reputation, it may be a satisfaction for you to know that you intrust your daughter to one who has more scruples on this subject than yourself. If I raised any objections, it was not for my own sake, but for that of your safety and the good name of Miss Bos."

"Give me your hand," he replied, as he approached me; "you are a good fellow, and you are quite right. I have misjudged you, for your objections do you credit. I trust that this frank confession may satisfy you. I have not been in the habit of asking pardon, and I should regret to have to give you satisfaction by any other means."

I assured him that I was perfectly satisfied, and I could not help inwardly laughing at the absurd idea that, as a worthy ending to all the adventures of the day, I should have to terminate it by a duel with my preserver.

There was now nothing left for me but to agree to the proposal, and I did so, although an inner voice whispered that I was involving myself in entanglements from which it would eventually prove difficult to escape.

"May I enter?" asked Amelia, knocking at the door.

"Have you a light with you?" asked her father. "We wanted it, for it had now become pitch dark."

"Light and supper," was the reply.

"Wait a moment, then," said Bos, "until I have closed the shutters; some one might see us from the outside. We cannot be too careful."

As he spoke he closed the shutters, and then allowed Amelia to enter. In one hand she held a bottle, in which was fixed a lighted candle, whilst a napkin hung over her arm; in the other hand she had a tin box. Old Martha followed with a bottle of beer, and a plate containing a tumbler, a wine-glass, a basin, a pepper-box, two steel forks, a tin spoon, and three knives of different patterns.

"The company will have to make shift," said the old one; "there be plenty of fine tumblers and plates here, I can tell you, but the lady has got them locked away."

"Ah!" I thought, "so this place belongs to a lady, does it? I wonder whether she knows what sort of guests are at this moment staying at her farm."

Meanwhile I observed the old woman with some attention; I fancied I had seen her before, though I could not recollect when or where, and a very simple incident soon confirmed me in this supposition.

In arranging the supper table Martha dropped a knife on the floor ; I picked it up and handed it to her. On taking it from me she looked straight in my face, and all at once began to tremble violently.

"Holy Virgin ! " she cried, "is it possible ? "

"What is possible ? " asked Mr. Bos. "Do you know this gentleman ? "

"Really, I cannot say ; but that gentleman looks just the image of a little nephew of the lady's who used to visit us sometimes, years ago ; but it cannot be, because . . ."

"Martha," said Bos, whom the turn of the conversation did not appear to please, "you cannot know the gentleman ; he has only come to-day into the country for the first time. Go back to the kitchen, and give up these foolish thoughts."

"Well," repeated Martha, as she went downstairs to Amelia, "he is exactly like the young gentleman."

Wishing to learn something about her, I ventured to ask my host if the old crone lived all alone.

"Her son, a retired sailor, lives with her," said he. "It is true that she gets little assistance from him, as she tells me ; he is seldom at home, and spends his time in taverns and gaming-houses."

"Who knows," said I, "but that her son may be the same fellow who received twice such a good lesson from you to-day."

"That's not unlikely," said Bos, laughing ; "in that case, I have badly repaid him for the services which his mother renders me ; but, if so, we may well be glad that he is not at home, for from such a fellow you may expect anything. I shall try and find out whether your suspicions be correct."

At this moment Amelia returned with a dish of pancakes, which she placed on the table.

We sat down to our meal, and now I found a better opportunity of observing the young lady, who was destined to be my travelling companion the following morning. She was rather above the middle height, well-shaped and of exquisite symmetry. Her lovely large brown eyes were extremely fascinating, and their permanent expression was that of sadness. Her long lashes and gracefully-arched eyebrows were of the same glossy black colour as her hair, which fell in natural curls down her neck. The form of her face was a perfect oval, her nose somewhat aquiline, and the finely-curved lips of a bright vermillion. Her dark complexion was not of that transparent clearness so conspicuous in a pretty fair girl, but was suffused with that warm tint which one meets with among Spanish or Italian women.

It was not only in her eyes that a look of melancholy was observable. In an occasional furrow that marked the smooth brow, and in a peculiarly painful expression about her mouth, I thought I could detect traces of deep-seated grief. It was very rarely that a faint blush mounted to her cheeks, and when she smiled it was rather a smile of melancholy than of gladness.

The movements and manners both of father and daughter were easy and refined. The only thing that displeased me in Mr. Bos was his rather patronising and condescending air. It was evident that he had been accustomed to command, and that he could scarcely reconcile himself to his present humble condition. As for Miss Bos, all that she did or spoke was equally well-mannered and polite, but not calculated to encourage the least familiarity.

VII.

"MR. HUYCK will be kind enough to take you to Amsterdam, Amelia," said my host, after we had continued our meal for some moments in silence.

Amelia said nothing, but she gently bent her head, from which one might as easily infer that she would condescend to accept my company as that she felt herself honoured by it.

"And have we to travel along that charming road through which we came this evening?" I inquired with a laugh; "if so, I pity Miss Bos."

"That is unnecessary," he answered; "and we need not have taken it to-day, but I was of opinion that the muddy country road would not retain so long the marks of my footsteps as the gravel path through the forest."

"Has the young lady also been obliged to travel by this abominable road?" I exclaimed.

"Yes," said Bos, "and, like myself, loaded with bag and baggage; besides, Amelia wanted to follow the example of *Aesop*, and carry the provender basket, although that was the heaviest of all our luggage, and was not gradually emptied on the road, as was the case with the Phrygian's."

"It is true," said Amelia, as she rubbed her delicate little hands. "My fingers still bear the mark of the ring by which I held it."

" You really take away my appetite," said I, " when I think of the pain which the carrying of these victuals must have occasioned you."

" My friend," remarked Mr. Bos, with more feeling than I had judged him capable of, " if the remembrance of my daughter's afflictions was to prevent me from eating, I should long since have forgotten the taste of food."

As he spoke he grasped Amelia's hand with a warmth which plainly showed that, whatever were his faults, he was still sincerely attached to his daughter.

" Come," said he, " we must hope that this distressing state of affairs will not last much longer. A few days more, and then, if my presentiment does not deceive me, we shall be relieved from all our cares and anxieties, and better days will dawn ; . . . we must not give way to our feelings before our guest."

And, immediately changing the subject, he commenced to converse with me about my travels. I observed from his discourse that he had not only visited most of the countries of Europe, but that he possessed also a thorough knowledge of the manners, customs, and politics of the different nations ; in fact, that he was acquainted with important details such as could only have been gathered from an intimate connection with persons of the highest authority and influence in their respective countries.

At length, as the evening wore on, our discourse began to flag a little, and Mr. Bos inquired if he could have the pleasure of conducting me to my bedroom.

I agreed, and he led me up a small steep stair into a room of very diminutive proportions.

" I am afraid," said he, pointing to a narrow bedstead

in the corner, "that this place will not greatly please you ; but you will have to make shift."

I told him that he need have no uneasiness, as I had learned to rough it on my travels ; and after he had left I speedily undressed, and retired to rest. But I must confess that my bed was far from comfortable, consisting only of a straw mattress, an extremely short sheet, and a pillow, which the following morning I discovered to be ingeniously contrived out of a lot of old fishing-nets, covered with a torn sack.

However, it was not my uncomfortable bed that kept me from sleeping after such a fatiguing day. On the contrary, it was the effect produced upon my mind by these very fatigues that prevented me from enjoying a night's rest. A thousand different and confused ideas continually troubled me, and I felt a burning sensation in my head that chased away all slumber. The adventures of the day were constantly before me, clad in the most fantastic and hideous garb ; and when at length the angel of sleep did take compassion upon me, my repose was troubled by the most fearful dreams.

In the midst of my sleep I was aroused by three loud knocks on the outer door. No doubt it was the old woman's son coming home.

Day was breaking. I quickly crept out of bed, dressed myself, took hold of my stick, sat down on the only chair in the room, and listened. I soon heard Martha approaching the outer door. I rose, and was on the point of going to awake Mr. Bos, when I heard the old woman say, "There are some friends of the lady sleeping here to-night ; I must not let you in ; you had better get into the barn."

•After some vain attempts to push the door open, the man left, grumbling and swearing as he went.

I sat down a little longer, then I approached the window, opened it with as little noise as possible, and inhaled the refreshing air of the early morning. I beheld a view well worthy of the painter's brush. On the left arose a fine group of venerable oaks, the great trunks, with their heavy branches, standing out in bold relief against the still dusky sky and the grey surface of the Zuider Zee. A little nearer stood an old moss-grown ruin, evidently of an ancient monastery. To the right the ground became undulating, and here the view was occasionally broken by ranges of hills, some planted with corn and buckwheat, some covered with gorse and brambles, others again rich with violet-coloured flowers, among which flocks of white-fleeced sheep were browsing. The stillness was occasionally broken by the deep lowing of cattle, and the crowing of a cock which was strutting alongside a barn, in anticipation of the approaching sunshine. Suddenly the thought struck me that once before I had gazed on this very landscape, though I could not recollect when. And yet, as far as I knew, I had never been in this house. After repeated endeavours to find a reason for this fancy of mine, I at last grew tired of the subject, and dismissed it from my mind. The morning air had a beneficial effect upon me, and as the darkness disappeared before the sunlight my misgivings and dreams of the night faded away. Lying down again I fell into a refreshing sleep, from which I was at length awakened by the voice of my host, and, rubbing my eyes, I saw Mr. Bos standing before me.

"It is time," said he. "I am sorry that I have to dis-

turb you, but I suppose you would not like to miss the first canal-boat."

I rose, and as I made use of the water and towel which he brought me, I told him what I had heard during the night.

"It is just as I expected," he replied; "I have taken the precaution to give Martha the necessary instructions. However, that vagabond must not see either of us here, the consequences might be dangerous. I must go and make some arrangements with the old woman. Meanwhile, be kind enough to go with me to my daughter."

We entered the room in which we had spent the previous evening, where we found Amelia. Mr. Bos left us alone, but he returned very soon, and said—

"It is all right; the woman's son, Andrew, is asleep in the barn, and before he is awake we shall be far away. I have warned his mother that the police are on his track, and that will be enough, I think, to make him leave the neighbourhood."

In another half-hour we were on the road to Naarden. Mr. Bos led the way, carrying a heavy box, which I presumed contained Amelia's clothing. He had doffed his red cloak, and wore a more ordinary hat than his old Spanish sombrero. His daughter followed him in silence, and I brought up the rear. After a short walk we came to a sort of causeway, and there my guide halted.

"Here we must part," he said. "This footpath on the left leads to the gates of Naarden. Farewell, Amelia! may God protect you, and grant you the necessary strength and courage to fulfil your difficult task."

As he spoke he kissed her affectionately on her forehead. She did not cry, she made no answer; but the

death-like pallor of her features was ample evidence of her feelings.

"As for you, sir," said Bos, grasping my hand, "let me thank you for the present for your kindness. I intrust my daughter to you, and I am convinced that you will not abuse my confidence."

"Is there anything else I can do for you?" I asked him.

"Not for the present. I have troubled you too much already. . . . One word more . . . If ever I should fall into the hands of my enemies, take pity on my unhappy daughter, be her friend. . . . See that she may find a suitable haven of refuge."

I bowed, and promised to fulfil his request. Then he once more took leave of Amelia, and, turning to the right, departed with hasty steps by the road leading to the seaside. I took up the box which he had set down, and, following the footpath in silence, we soon arrived at Naarden, where we breakfasted. Thence we proceeded to the quay, took tickets for the voyage, and embarked on the canal-boat.

"Welcome, Mr. Huyck," I heard a voice cry out, and looking round I observed Simon, the pedlar, standing on deck. "Are you still here? I thought you were safe and sound in Amsterdam! Can I sell you nothing? No? good-luck to you all the same! I wish you a nice voyage."

The signal was now given, the boat was pushed off, and I conducted Amelia to the cabin.

We soon entered into a lively and interesting conversation, and I could not sufficiently admire the good sense and kind-heartedness of my travelling companion. So the time sped lightly by until we reached the village

of Muiden, where we had to disembark and continue the voyage in another boat. I offered my arm to Amelia, and thus we walked through Muiden, when something occurred which made me regret having agreed to Bos's proposal to accompany his daughter. I heard the rattling of a carriage close behind me, and on turning round saw an elegant coach and four milk-white horses, with two footmen seated behind, passing by me. In the carriage I recognised old Mr. Blaek, accompanied by his poet, and by his beautiful niece. I felt the blood rising to my face. I raised my hat—Mr. Blaek did not notice me, but Harriet saw me, and the cold glance she bestowed on me stung me to the quick. She had recognised me, that was certain ; and what would she think of me now? I had told her that I was travelling alone to Amsterdam, and now she saw me walking arm in arm with a young lady; perhaps I should never have an opportunity to give her an explanation. Even if Bos freed me from all secrecy, who would believe me if I related the extraordinary adventures which I had met with during the last few hours?

But what did it concern me whether Harriet Blaek had seen me or not? What interest could I feel in a girl whom I had beheld but once? I was surely not in love with her! It was impossible for a person of my cool and sedate temperament to fall in love at first sight!

These and similar thoughts crowding on my mind drew away all my attention from Amelia, who walked in silence beside me. I had merely observed that when I blushed as the carriage passed, she had cast on me a furtive glance, and drew her veil closer over her features. I even fancied that I felt her arm trembling

against mine. However, I paid her little attention, and if she occupied my mind at all, it was with the rather ungenerous wish that she were miles away.

But as soon as we had left Muiden and were once more seated in the boat, my thoughts ran in another channel, and I quite forgot my own anxieties at the thought of the distress of my travelling companion ; for scarcely had we put off when she burst into tears.

"For Heaven's sake," said I, "be calm. It grieves me so much to see you weep."

"Pardon me . . . oh, pardon me, Mr. Huyck," she sobbed. "I am very foolish, but it will be over soon. Oh ! perhaps it will do me good. I have not cried for years."

I knew from experience that nothing had a more soothing effect on those who suffer than to allow them to explain the cause of their grief, so I asked—

"If it be not rude of me to inquire, what is the cause of this bitter sorrow? Have I given you any offence? if so, I sincerely beg your pardon. But do not leave me in uncertainty. Grant me your confidence ; remember that your father has put you under my care ; look upon me as your brother, and tell me what it is that oppresses you."

"Do not ask me," she replied, as she wiped her eyes and hid her face in her hands. "You would think me too foolish, too childish ; and yet," she continued after a pause, raising her head and looking earnestly at me, "why should I keep a secret which you have guessed already, no doubt? I have calmly and patiently endured the sorrows and vicissitudes which have hitherto chequered my short career. I have never refused to make any sacrifice when the life or the safety of my

father was at stake. Formerly—I am almost ashamed to say so now—I was served and obeyed by hundreds, and the least offence against me was punished as a crime. I had never any occasion to cast down my eyes before any one, or to be ashamed of my actions ; but now, to be brought so low as to perceive that an honourable man, when he is in my company and meets an acquaintance feels ashamed, as if he had committed a crime . . . it is that which wounds me to the very soul ; it is a contrast that almost drives me mad."

I felt abashed and was silent, for I did not know what to say in my defence. How vain and childish appeared my chagrin in comparison with the deep sorrow that agitated her bosom. I pitied her, but admired the maidenly purity which made her attach such an importance to a circumstance which might either not have been noticed by others, or looked upon as a mere trifle. At length I summed up courage to say—

"I confess that I was somewhat embarrassed when that carriage passed us and I noticed Miss Blaek inside."

"Miss Blaek," repeated Amelia, with a scrutinising glance. "I thought so ;—but pardon me, I have interrupted you ; pray proceed."

"I saw her yesterday ; she is a particular friend of my sister's, and it might prove very unpleasant for both of us, if it got abroad that . . ."

"Mr. Huyck," Amelia interrupted, "I assure you I much regret that my father has troubled you with a task which may prove very unpleasant to you in its consequences. A curse seems to rest on our house, and every service that is rendered us ruins him who renders it."

"Miss Bos," said I, "believe me, that if the assistance

which I now endeavour to lend you answers to your father's expectations, it will never cause me any unhappiness; for whatever the consequences may be, I shall still have the satisfaction of having fulfilled a duty of gratitude, and of having acted according to my own inclinations."

"You are an honourable man, Mr. Huyck," she replied, with emotion; "and in trusting you, my father has given me a fresh proof of his knowledge of human character."

We were now getting very near to Amsterdam.

"Here our acquaintance must end," said Amelia. "As soon as we have left the barge we shall part, perhaps for ever. May God grant health and happiness to those that are dear to you. * May He reward you with His choicest blessings for what you have so generously done for my father's sake, the recollection of which, I trust, may speedily be effaced from your mind."

"Effaced," I repeated, "and why? The only sentiment that fills my breast at present is that of regret at the thought that perhaps I shall never see you again."

"That regret will soon pass away," she replied, shaking her head; "and it will also be better for you, if you forget our brief intimacy. The connections among whom your birth and position have placed you, do not permit you to keep up any acquaintance with unfortunates such as we, whom destiny has compelled to shun the light of day. Each of us has a different duty to fulfil; the son of the high bailiff has already done enough for me; to do more would not aid us, while, perhaps, it would compromise him."

"Be that as it may," I answered, "I earnestly hope that you may prosper, and that, after the disasters and

vicissitudes to which you have been subjected, you may one day find yourself once more in that social position for which, no doubt, your birth, your education, and acquirements have destined you."

Amelia pressed my hand gratefully, and we did not speak another word until we arrived at Amsterdam. We walked together as far as the Amstel Street, when we took a cordial leave of one another and went our separate ways.

VIII.

QUITE elated, I passed through the different streets until I approached my father's house ; and as I ran up the steps it seemed to me that the sound of my feet on the broad flagstones was less audible than the beating of my own heart. I peeped into the parlour, and saw my mother and my eldest sister, both sitting in their customary places ; my eyes grew dim, and I began to pull away at the bell as if the house were on fire. An old servant who opened the door went into ecstasies on seeing me, and the next moment I embraced my mother and sister. Then was heard a confused sound of running and jumping, and my younger brothers and sisters came clattering downstairs, their arrival being the prelude to such an amount of kissing, laughing, and crying, intermingled with inquiries and shouts of delight, that any ordinary mortal would have been half distracted.

Very soon my father returned home from his duties at the Town Hall, and now, with so many kind and beloved faces near me, surrounded by such a host of old and familiar associations, I indeed felt, with emotion, that 'there is no place like home.'

We spent a few hours in pleasant chat. I once more took my old seat with the family at dinner, and after the meal retired with my father to his study. Acting on his advice, I sat down in a large arm-

chair, and whilst he was occupied with some books and papers, soon fell into a deep slumber.

I had passed about half-an-hour in this comfortable position, when I was aroused by the sound of three distinct knocks.

"There is some one knocking," said I, making a movement towards the door.

"Do not disturb yourself," said my father, "it is only Heynz, who comes to make his report. Sleep on," he continued, smiling, "then you will not be tempted to divulge the secrets of the law."

As he spoke he took a bunch of keys from his pocket, and opened a door in a corner of the room, affording entrance to an individual whom I will now describe.

William Heynz was a man of about sixty summers. He was short of stature, attired in a dress that was simple enough, but, at the same time, scrupulously neat and clean. His features were nothing uncommon; but his small, grey eyes, keen and sparkling, showed that he did not lack shrewdness and energy. His career had been a most eventful one. In his early youth he had given proofs of a remarkable talent for drawing. A French artist, who was then travelling in Holland, took young Heynz under his protection, and the lad accompanied him on his travels. His acquaintance with that artist, far from bringing him the wealth and fame which his parents had expected, proved only a source of shame and misery. At first everything went well; both master and pupil were charmed with each other; but at once all young Heynz's prospects were swept away for ever. Whilst they were staying in Switzerland, his master was assassinated in an inn and robbed of all he had about

him. The murderers escaped, and suspicion fell on William, who was thrown into prison, with no one to depend on for support or assistance. After a detention of nearly a twelvemonth, he was discharged, as there was no evidence against him, and he found himself utterly destitute and friendless in a foreign land. He determined to beg his way to Paris, where some of his mother's relatives resided. The journey from Geneva to Lyons took him months to perform, for he was several times arrested on the road and incarcerated as a vagabond. Having at length reached Lyons, a mere accident brought him into contact with the notorious robber Cartouche, from whom he received a purse of gold as a present. He then pursued his journey and soon arrived at Paris, where he was well received by his uncle. Here he decided to remain for a little while for the sake of perfecting himself in his art. Meanwhile he earned his living by portrait-painting, in which he had some success. But his art, instead of producing him honour and riches, brought him naught but disgrace and wretchedness.

One day, having taken a likeness of the Duke de Choiseul, he put the money which he received in payment for his work into the purse which Cartouche had given him, and which he kept by him on account of its elegance. The Duke said nothing, but on the following day Heynz was summoned before a judge, who asked him how he came by the purse, which, it appeared, had been stolen from that nobleman whilst staying at Lyons. Heynz, afraid to confess that he had received it from Cartouche, deliberately asserted that he purchased it of a travelling hawker. Inquiries were made, and, unfortunately, it was discovered that he was at Lyons in poor circumstances at the very time of the theft;

and that a few days afterwards he had resumed his journey dressed in elegant attire. The charge of the murder of the French artist was at the same time reconsidered, and was not at all calculated to move the mind of the judge in his favour. He was ultimately sentenced to the galleys, where he spent ten years. His behaviour, however, contrasted so strongly with that of the other convicts that the authorities intrusted to him the supervision over his fellow-prisoners. At length some unexpected occurrence brought to light his innocence of both the crimes of which he had been accused. He was discharged from prison, and, with the little money he had procured from his relations in Paris, he returned to his native land. Arrived in Amsterdam, he found his parents dead. He took up his abode at the Hague, and once more devoted himself to the painter's art. But the years of study had been miserably wasted, and although he was still fortunate in obtaining faithful likenesses, his portraits lacked the firmness of expression and vivid colouring which are the characteristics of a master-hand. He was, therefore, only patronised by the less wealthy, who were tempted by the moderate price which he charged for his productions.

Whilst supporting himself in this quiet way he was for the third time accused of a crime which he had never committed. He had painted a portrait of a jeweller's wife in an apartment from which, soon after his departure, some valuable articles were missed. On inquiries being instituted, it appeared that a man, answering to the description given of Heynz, had pawned them. He was once more taken before the magistrate and imprisoned. During his confinement, however, he

procured the confidence of a band of thieves who were his fellow-prisoners, by sketching their portraits on the walls in charcoal. These vagabonds told him of a clever scheme which they had formed for their escape, and which would, no doubt, have succeeded if Heynz had not divulged their secret to the chief gaoler. He had also managed to learn who had committed the robbery at the jeweller's, and it appeared that the thief was none other than his own son. As a consequence of his double discovery, he was not only discharged, but was even rewarded.

Meanwhile the history of Heynz attracted the attention of the high bailiff of Amsterdam, my father's predecessor. He made inquiries about the artist, and came to the conclusion that he was a fit person to fill a vacant office of responsibility in the secret police. That magistrate was of opinion that a person who had spent so many years in the company of thieves and vagabonds must needs know all their stratagems. He also thought that Heynz could be trusted, as he had not been contaminated by the companions amongst whom he had so long lived, spoke several languages, and had a profession which ostensibly he still exercised, and which would give him access into all circles. An arrangement was soon made; for not only was the salary a very tempting one, but Heynz quickly conceived a liking for his employment, and remained a faithful servant of the law. In the eyes of the world he was merely an artist by profession. To the little profits which his portraits produced him, he added the money which he received by letting furnished apartments, which afforded him frequent opportunities for keeping his eyes on suspected individuals, and of learning their plans, in

order to deliver them into the hands of justice if necessary.

My father's house was connected by means of a passage with a mansion which had formerly been a monastery. Through this passage Heynz passed unobserved twice a day, and came as he did now, knocking at the door of my father's study. He was to some extent respected by my father; for besides valuing him for his ability and for his faithful services, as a huntsman would value his best hound, he perceived that there was really nothing to be said against the man, although he held an office that had formerly been filled by persons of ill fame, according to the old notion that thieves must be caught by thieves.

As it was not possible always to conceal Heynz from the eyes of our family, I, as well as all my brothers and sisters, had from our earliest youth been forbidden to speak of his visits at our house. The consequence was that we had always looked upon him as some mysterious being, to be treated with awe and veneration.

On Heynz entering the room I moved my chair farther into the corner, and made myself as comfortable as possible in anticipation of another nap; but, as is usually the case, when a man does his best to fall asleep he seldom succeeds. So it was with me, and in spite of myself, I was obliged to listen to a conversation which, although not very interesting at first, gradually assumed sufficient importance to attract my closest attention.

"Well, Heynz," asked my father, seating himself before his papers, pen in hand, "what news do you bring?"

I heard Heynz turn over the leaves of a note-book,

in which he usually recorded the events of the day. And now he began to give a detailed and systematic enumeration of his latest discoveries, in a strong French accent, acquired during his lengthy stay in France. But as every one is perhaps not very anxious to know the secrets of the police, I shall not give any unnecessary details, and content myself with simply repeating the more interesting part of the dialogue between the high bailiff and Heynz.

The detective handed my father a list, from which the latter commenced reading aloud—

“Arrivals at Amsterdam : by the Haarlem canal-boat. No suspected persons, except the waiter of the grand coffee-house in The Hague.—That man must not be lost sight of. By the Muiden canal-boat. . .”

Here I became particularly attentive—

“By the Muiden boat : Hm ! hm ! Mr. Ferdinand Huyck.”

“I congratulate you, sir, on the safe return of your son.”

“Thank you. Who is that Miss Bos whom I find on the list?”

I began to tremble violently, but Heynz’s answer reassured me.

“The daughter of the tobacconist on the Lelie canal.”

“Are there, then, two Misses Bos who came from Muiden,” thought I, “or has Heynz been duped?”

“I see here the name of Miss Van Beveren,” said my father ; “where does she take up her abode ?”

“With your humble servant,” answered Heynz ; “she is a nice girl, from Deventer.”

“Very well,” replied my father ; “what is the news from the north ?”

"The band, which has there again been committing some depredations, consists of three individuals."

Here I became attentive. "It would be very funny," thought I, "if the attack made on myself were now brought forward."

"The first," continued Heynz, "is a gipsy named Peter Hendriks, otherwise called Haentje, who has been arrested this morning, as I hear; the second is Andrew Mathissen, a discharged sailor, the son of a peasant, near Naarden."

"I know his mother and him, too," said my father.

"Your son, Mr. Ferdinand," continued Heynz, "will be able to tell you how that Andrew behaved yesterday in the inn at Zoest. From that village he returned to his mother's house, but when the officers came to look for him this morning the bird had flown."

"He will come into the net; and the third?"

"The third, who appears to be the chief of the band, is none else than the renowned Black Peter, formerly a pirate in the West Indies, and now, for want of better employment, occupying himself with a little highway robbery. He is no bird to be caught with chaff, but Mat, the blind man, will find out whether he cannot come upon his track and inform me of his doings."

"All right; but now for the most important news of all; have you heard anything of the Knight of the Golden Fleece?"

"The Knight of the Golden Fleece and his daughter left Amersfoort at 7.30 yesterday morning, in a tilt-cart; at Zoest they halted, and being rudely treated by Andrew Mathissen, the Knight dealt the latter a blow which almost saved the hangman some trouble; at least so little Simon, the hawker, says."

"Very well ; proceed."

"They dined at Eemnes, left the tilt-cart in the neighbourhood of Naarden . . . and since then nothing has been heard of them."

"Nothing," repeated my father, "in a tone of vexation ; " did Simon the hawker follow them ?"

"Simon had orders to keep an eye on Andrew as well ; he was like a man who wanted to catch two hares at once."

"He should have attended to the Knight of the Golden Fleece. The States have issued a warrant against him—he is a man of more importance than Andrew, I should think."

"Allow me to observe, that all the innkeepers and coachmen between Amsterdam and Arnhem have the Knight's portrait, and that he is sure to be arrested as soon as he makes his appearance."

"That is not enough. He must be taken before he is able to obtain possession of certain documents which are somewhere in this city, and of the highest importance. It is no ordinary person with whom you have to deal : he knows what to do, and will be a match for us. Besides, he still has friends and connections who will lend him a helping hand. Can you not discover with whom he is in correspondence ?"

"Not yet, your honour, but, if you desire it, we could communicate with the post-office."

"He does not write his letters himself, you may be sure. If I only knew some one here with whom he is in correspondence."

. My father little thought that the very person who could have given him all information on that point was present in the room. What I had heard had made such a strong

impression on my mind that I could pay no more attention to the conversation between my father and Heynz, and shortly afterwards the detective retired in the same mysterious fashion as he came. My position was a very unpleasant one. I knew that one day my secret would be discovered, and that my father would find it out ; and then I thought how annoyed he would be if he perceived that I could have assisted him in his official duties, and had not done so.

And yet I should have loathed myself, if I could have betrayed the man who had saved my life.

I, therefore, feigned sleep, and did not rise from my seat until a considerable time after Heynz had left.

IX.

AFTER my father and I had some private conversation with regard to my future career, we both returned to the parlour. There we found my mother; my sister Susan-nah, Aunt Lina, and Aunt Louisa.

Aunt Lina was a spinster of about forty-five years of age and very religious. But with her piety did not merely consist of outward show, but sprang from a pure and benevolent heart. One might take objection to her stiff, inelegant dress, her puritanical language might not always please, perhaps she was occasionally too severe on harmless amusements ; but none could reproach her with cant or hypocrisy. She assailed sin, but not the sinner ; never was her heart deaf to the cry of suffering, and what she gave away, she gave in secret. Her want of discrimination and her benevolent spirit sometimes caused her to dispense her charity to some who were undeserving of it ; but she always declared that she would rather be deceived by the wicked a hundred times, than that a single sufferer should leave her door uncom-forted. Her sister, Mrs. Louisa Van Bempden, was an entirely different woman. She had been early married to a very wealthy husband, who, having no nearer relations, had, on his death, left her an immense fortune. The position which she occupied in society compelled her to move in the fashionable world, nor did she feel any dis-

inclination to do so. Her days glided by in a continual series of balls, festivals, receptions, and pleasure trips. But she was by no means a mere devotee of fashion, but possessed many good qualities, and a very sympathetic nature.

"Welcome, dearest nephew," said Aunt Lina, embracing me; "thus shall the beloved of the Lord return;" and, approaching my father: "My dear brother, well may you say with the Prophet, 'Gather thou my sons from afar, yea, from the ends of the earth.'"

"Good evening, dearest Ferdinand," exclaimed Aunt Louisa, who, with tears in her eyes, pressed me to her heart. "So you have arrived at last? I have been longing for your return, and I am glad to see you so well."

After having passed an hour or two in pleasant chat, with which the sound of joyous laughter was often mingled, I retired to my room, and returned with a load of packages and boxes. The awful moment of unpacking the presents which I had brought with me had arrived. It would interest a stranger very little were I to give him a complete enumeration of the different articles which I presented first to the younger members of the family and then to my elder relatives, or attempt to depict the impressions which they produced. But I found it a very agreeable task, the more so as most of the presents appeared to give general satisfaction.

All were pleased and delighted; and the general good humour was increased when some sumptuous dishes and old wines appeared on the supper table in honour of my return. The evening passed as agreeably as possible, and only two accidents happened: a piece of pie fell on Aunt Lina's snowwhite collar, and my young brother Jack spilled half a glass of wine over one of the

pictures which I had given him ; two occurrences, which, however, in as far as I could discover, made no lasting impression on the suffering parties.

A few days after my return to Amsterdam I had occasion to visit Lucas Helding, the poet of Guldenhof, who lodged at the house of William Heynz, on the Raam Canal. I conversed with Helding for some time in his rooms on the top floor of the house, and in coming down the old man stood still and listened at the door of a front room.

"It seems that there is something wrong going on here," he exclaimed.

"Indeed," I replied, "the people appear to be quarrelling." And I, too, stood still, for the voices seemed to me not unfamiliar.

"Upon my life, it is the voice of Mr. Louis Blaek," said Helding. "I suppose he came for me, and mistook the room for mine."

"Hush!" said I, as I listened anxiously. I heard a woman exclaim loudly—

"Once more, sir, I entreat you to leave this room, or you will compel me to call for assistance."

"Is it possible!" I exclaimed, as, impelled by an involuntary impulse, and quite regardless of the consequences, I pushed the door open and entered. In the centre of the room Amelia, with flaming eyes and in a queenly attitude, was pointing to the door, whilst Louis Blaek stood near, evidently not at all inclined to obey her.

My entrance caused no slight commotion. Amelia recognised me at once; a momentary blush suffused her features, and she made a movement towards me, as though she wished to place herself under my protection.

"Who is there?" asked Louis, whose back was turned to us. Turning round abruptly, he recognised me, and changed colour; but recovering himself, he looked in turns at Amelia and me with a sneering smile, and said—

"Behold a more welcome guest. Now I shall have to leave the field."

"Sir," said I, "you are mistaken. I declare to you, on my word of honour, that I was not aware that this young lady lived here. I was returning from a visit to Mr. Helding, but I thought it necessary to enter, as I imagined that some one here was being rudely treated."

"Sir," answered Louis, "if you ascribe any improper treatment to me, you shall have to give me satisfaction for such an expression."

"I only said that I imagined as much," I continued, not feeling inclined to enter into an unnecessary dispute. "The young lady alone can decide if my suspicions are unfounded."

"The young lady is sure to say that you are right; for you do not mean to tell me that you who accompanied her to town should not know where she lives."

"Take care," said I, getting excited; "I do not like any one to place a false construction on my words."

"You have insulted me," said Louis, "and you shall give me satisfaction."

"Whenever you please," I replied hotly; "but we shall first leave this house, and spare the young lady any further unpleasantness."

"At your service," said Louis, pushing aside Helding, who had hold of his arm.

"One moment!" exclaimed Amelia, running towards the door. "Sir," she continued, addressing Louis, "I just

now entreated you to leave me alone ; I now desire you, if you value the name of an honourable man, to listen to me for a moment. This gentleman has spoken the truth. He did not know, he could not know, that I was staying here. How you succeeded in finding me out is a mystery which I will not try to solve. I do not know what thoughts you may harbour concerning me, and I have no wish to learn them ; but I declare that any offensive innuendo on my brief acquaintance with Mr. Huyck is entirely uncalled for and unfounded."

"Just as I thought," said Louis. " You are too polite to contradict Mr. Huyck."

" You see, miss," I remarked, " this gentleman will not listen to reason, and is determined to draw false inferences from all that is told him."

" Really, Mr. Louis," observed Helding, " you are mistaken. Mr. Huyck came to visit me, and he would have passed this room without entering, if I had not called his attention to the noise."

" Sir," said Amelia, addressing Helding, " you are a man of years ; pray request these gentlemen to leave me, and let them forget that they ever made my acquaintance."

" Come, Helding, don't you hear ? " sneered Louis contemptuously ; " take hold of my arm and throw me downstairs."

" Enough of this, sir," I replied ; " you have been told that the young lady wishes to be alone, and you shall obey her as well as I ; and if you will not do so quietly, I shall take the liberty to act as you have proposed Mr. Helding to do." Whilst speaking, I laid hold of his arm, and was going to suit the action to the word, when the door opened, and Heynz, the landlord, entered the room.

"I think," said he, speaking in his usual half-French, half-Dutch idiom, "that things are not *comme il faut* here, and that there is more noise in my respectable house than there should be. I was not aware, *mademoiselle*, that you received such frequent *visites*. Had I thought that this was your *habitude*, I should not have let you these *apartements* . . . But what do I see? Mr. Blaek! your humble servant. How is your father? My friend Helding here too! Mr. Huyck! welcome home. But may I ask what is the meaning of all this?"

"Oh!" said Louis, "it is simple enough. I was paying a visit to this young lady, and Mr. Huyck is pleased to take exception to it."

"Mr. Heynz," observed Amelia, with dignity, "I have engaged this room, and I have a right to insist that I may enjoy my freedom in it."

"Your freedom, *certainement!*" replied Heynz, who misunderstood her. "No one can prevent you from receiving *visites*; but this house has always enjoyed an *honnête réputation*, and I do not let my rooms to ladies who . . . who receive visits from gentlemen. Does *mademoiselle* understand me?"

"No sir! I do not understand you," answered Amelia, blushing with shame and indignation; "and you understand me still less. What I want is to be free to receive no one; and as the master of this house, you will oblige me by taking care that people do not come walking into my room as if . . . it were a roadside inn. I wish to be alone, and if I am not allowed to be so, I shall have to look about for another abode."

"I do not think," said I, glancing at Heynz, "that the lady desires anything unreasonable."

"Not at all," he remarked. "I am sorry I was *en erreur*.

Allons ! Gentlemen, you have heard what *mademoiselle* desires. Come, friend Helding, march ! ”

“ My respects to the company,” said Helding, with a bow, as he retired.

Assured by the presence of Heynz that Amelia need fear no further insults, I also bowed and left the room, but took up a position on the landing, as I wished to meet Blaek.

“ Adieu, proud beauty,” said the latter. “ I am very sorry that I have perhaps compelled you to pretend that you did not know this gentleman. Well, I suppose you have been acquainted with him longer than with me, and I shall trouble you no more to-day. Mr. Huyck, do not go yet ; I should like to have a word with you.”

“ I was waiting for you,” I replied.

“ *Eh bien ?* ” remarked Heynz, following us downstairs. “ The gentlemen will not be so foolish as to create a disturbance in the street ? If they have any dispute, may I ask them to step into my parlour and there talk the matter over ? ”

As he spoke he passed by us and opened the parlour door. I entered, and stood leaning against a chair, in expectation of what was to occur ; Louis Blaek followed, muttering something to himself, and wrapt in the contemplation of some portraits which adorned the wall. Heynz now joined us, closed the door behind him, placed some chairs for us, and sat down in a large arm-chair with all the dignity of a Turkish pasha. I could not help inwardly smiling at the comparison which I drew between the obedient official, who listened with respectful attention to the commands of the high bailiff, and the dignified personage who was now about to examine the high bailiff’s son.

"Gentlemen," said he when we were seated, "I know from experience whither youthful passion can lead us. You are aware that I have had some *malheurs* and some *rencontres*."

"Excuse me," said Louis, looking at his watch, "can't you cut it short? I have an appointment at six; it wants but a quarter of an hour to that time now."

"I have no desire to detain you," replied Heynz; "but may I be allowed to ask why you were quarrelling together?"

"I am not in the habit," said Louis contemptuously, "of taking counsel in an affair of honour with persons who are my inferiors in rank."

"I am only a portrait-painter, I know, sir," said Heynz, "but rather than allow any one to insult that young lady, I would take her part myself. I have learned to handle the sword in France, and have exchanged many a bullet with members of the *noblesse*. With regard to you, gentlemen, I shall not allow you to leave this house; and I shall send word to your parents, unless you promise me to end the *affaire* at once."

"You are an impudent fellow," said Louis, flushed with passion.

"No, sir, I am an artist," said Heynz; "but I have sufficient experience to know how to deal with gentlemen like you."

"I should like to see who will keep me here," cried Louis, as he laid his hand on the hilt of his sword. "As for you, Mr. Huyck, I shall send you a note this evening, and appoint a spot where we may settle the matter undisturbed. And now, Mr. Portrait-dauber, clear the road and open that door, or my sword shall go through you."

"Bah!" exclaimed Heynz, coolly rising from his seat, "I am not the innkeeper of the Hagendoorn Forest."

"What do you mean by these words?" asked Louis, with a start, as an ashy pallor suffused his features.

"I mean that some unpleasant incidents will occur, which are supposed to remain unknown; but people should not forget that sometimes forests have ears."

"You shall give me an explanation of these words," said Louis.

"With pleasure," answered Heynz; and, opening the door, he and Louis left the room. In a very short time the impetuous young fellow returned, and in a husky voice and with averted eyes said—

"We will leave the affair as it is, Mr. Huyck. I have been rather hasty, and Mr. Heynz has given me every necessary explanation."

"I desire nothing better," I replied, whereupon Louis touched his hat and retired.

"By what spell did you tame him?" I asked Heynz.

"Well, I will tell you what I would tell no one else: A short time since, this Mr. Blaek and some *compagnons, mauvais garnemens comme lui*, created a disturbance at an inn, where he gave the host a *coup d'épée*, which obliged him to keep his bed for a month. The affair was hushed up, as the young men were respectably connected, and as one of them was generous enough to pay the man a goodly sum of money. But Mr. Blaek, who was really the most *coupable* of all, remained in the background, and imagined that no one had betrayed him. I have now told him that I knew all about the affair."

"And are you not afraid," I asked, "that this may give him a clue to your connection with the police?"

"No fear of that; if he did suspect it he would not

dare to make it known. I told him that if he molested you it would be the worse for him."

"I thank you for your trouble ; but I should not like him to think me a coward."

"Look here, Mr. Huyck ; do as you like anywhere else, but in my house your father's son shall not be drawn into any *querelles* if I can help it."

"It was not out of fear for this Mr. Blaek, but for the sake of the young lady, that I wished to prevent any scandal."

"Bah !" said Heynz, as he mockingly shook his finger. "I have had too much experience to be duped ; I know very well that you are better acquainted with that damsel than you like to confess."

"What !" said I, with a start ; "you know . . ."

"That you arrived with her from Naarden. But don't be afraid : I know when to speak and when to be silent. I shall say nothing to papa."

The idea that I was dependent on that man's discretion was not very agreeable. At the same time I felt some misgivings as to whether he knew anything about my acquaintance with Amelia's father.

"Well, yes," said I indifferently ; "I travelled with her by the Naarden boat. What of that?"

"*Vous avez raison.* But neither of you spent the night at Naarden."

I looked at him steadfastly, but could not discover if he wished to show me that he knew my secret, or whether, on the contrary, he wanted to find it out. In any case, I determined to be on my guard, so I asked him as coolly as possible—

"You who know so much, do you know anything in disparagement of the young lady ?"

"Nothing," he replied ; "if it were so, she should not lodge in my house. Ah ! Heyaz is not to be deceived ; but, *franchement*, had any one else been travelling with her, I should have taken the trouble to discover by what means both of you found yourselves so suddenly in Naarden, with no one knowing how and whence you arrived there."

I felt quite relieved, for now it was evident that he knew nothing definite.

"Well," said I, "as neither Miss Van Beveren nor myself are suspected persons, I think you had better trouble yourself no more about us. There are matters of greater importance which require your attention."

With these words I rose, wished him good day, and left the house. I felt very annoyed at being dragged against my will from one adventure into another, and made to play a part in matters with which I would rather have had nothing to do.

X.

ON the following day my sister Susannah and I went on a visit to Aunt Louisa at her beautiful villa of Heizicht.

On arriving there I was not a little surprised to meet Harriet Blaek in my aunt's company.

This circumstance would naturally have afforded me great pleasure, but for the studied coldness which Miss Blaek assumed when brought face to face with me. This vexed me, although I imagined that I could divine the cause of her displeasure. By and by, as we walked in the grounds of the villa, I had an opportunity of speaking with her alone for a moment, and I resolved to put an end to our misunderstanding. But as she stood there, tracing figures in the sand with the point of her parasol, my courage failed me, and it seemed as if I should never be able to make the most of the few seconds at my disposal. At last I summoned up my courage, and said with a faint voice—

"I do not know, Miss Blaek, whether I am mistaken ; but I believe that I have unconsciously incurred your displeasure."

She looked at me in some surprise ; but, resuming her former manner, she answered with indifference—

"I have no right to be displeased with you, sir."

The ice was broken, so I continued : "I imagine, Miss

Blaek, that you treat me to-day, in the house of my relatives, with . . . with . . . less friendliness than when I was at Guldenhof."

"You do not mean to insult me?" said she, looking hard at me.

"This is far from my thoughts, and I indignantly repudiate such a misconstruction of my words. But I am not mistaken; something has occurred—some one has placed me in a bad light before you."

"Sir! . . . I do not know, . . . but it appears that I am to be cross-examined," she remarked, very ill at ease.

I saw that she would not state the reason of her displeasure, and I resolved to allude to it more directly, so I proceeded—

"How can you be so unreasonable as to impute wrong motives to everything I say? Last Wednesday, at Guldenhof, we were on such pleasant terms together, that I looked with delight at the possible future in store for me; and now you will scarcely honour me with an answer . . . no; already, the day before yesterday, when you drove past me at Muiden, your bow was so curt." . . .

"Sir!" she exclaimed, her eyes glistening with astonishment and indignation at my daring to make mention of that meeting.

"Or is it, perhaps, that meeting itself," I continued, "which has given rise to erroneous impressions about me? You are silent."

"Indeed, sir, I do not know what to reply," she remarked, with hesitation. "I am not your censor, and it is a matter of utter indifference to me with whom you keep company." . . .

"Allow me to remark," said I, "that that meeting

alone would not have influenced you against me. I presume that your cousin Louis, whom I met at Naarden, and who was perhaps misled by appearances, has inspired you with ideas which it is my duty to remove."

She changed colour, and a tear glistened in her eye. I perceived that I had guessed rightly.

"I have but lately returned home," I continued, "and I wish that my reputation should remain unsullied. Above all, I should not like you to misjudge me. I declare to you, on my word of honour, that I met the young lady by whom I was then accompanied, by a mere accident, that I hardly know her, and that between her and myself there exists no relation whatever. If it were otherwise, I would not have been shameless enough to commence this conversation."

"Sir," she replied, after a short silence, "there was not the least necessity for you to consider yourself answerable to me for your actions. It is true that people have told me . . . I thought . . . it does not matter what. I confess I have not treated you very politely. . . . I have been mistaken, and I beg your pardon."

"Do not talk about begging pardon," I said, now feeling quite at ease. "Appearances were against me, and it is I who should apologise for the indiscretion of which I have been guilty."

"Well," she replied, with a charming smile, "then we shall consider the matter as settled, and dismiss it from our minds."

"Oh, thank you," I exclaimed, and taking her little hand in mine I pressed it to my lips.

"Hello!" cried Susannah, who suddenly made her appearance, "where did you learn those manners?"

“Well, Susan,” said Harriet, blushing, “I thought that you would never return.”

“Do you hear, brother?” said Susannah; “you do not seem to possess the gift of making one forget the time.”

“How do I know that Miss Blaek will allow me to attempt it?” I replied, with a laugh.

The three of us now took a walk in the gardens, and Harriet’s manner towards me became more and more affable.

The next day, a Sunday, we all went to church after breakfast. When the preacher had finished the first part of his sermon, and whilst the congregation availed themselves, in the usual way, of this opportunity to indulge in some coughing and sneezing, I took a glance at the worshippers present, and saw among them an individual whom I had certainly not expected in such a place, and in whom I recognised the chief of the three highwaymen who had attacked me: the notorious Black Peter, who was most elegantly attired. His eyes met mine; he gave me a friendly nod, laid his finger on his lips, by way of an appeal to my silence, and concentrated all his attention on the sermon.

This strange encounter caused me no little emotion, and my attention became quite distracted from the service. I could not help casting my eyes on the bandit, who appeared to be hanging to the lips of the minister. At first I ascribed his demeanour to mere hypocrisy; but when the preacher began to give a startling picture of the fearful consequences of sin, I saw very plainly that his devotion was sincere. His eyes swam in tears, his breast heaved with emotion, and at

length, covering his face with his hands, he laid his head on the open Bible before him, and began to sob aloud. I thought that the seed sown by the preacher had fallen in fruitful soil, and that this man would turn away from the wrong path for ever! And at the concluding part of the service I offered up a fervent prayer for the poor penitent. Meanwhile, I was not a little surprised when, on leaving the church, I saw several of the villagers bow to the man as they went out.

On returning home, we sat down in the parlour to await the arrival of the guests whom my aunt had invited to dinner, and who soon made their appearance. They were Mr. Blaek and his son, another commercial man, Mr. Van Baalen, and a certain Captain Pulver.

The captain was a short, stout, rubicund little man, so corpulent that one was obliged to look at him from a distance to see his legs; whilst on the top of this little round figure was placed a little round head, just like a knob on the lid of a Delf teapot.

After dinner the captain said he would spin us a yarn about his experiences whilst in the service of the West India Company. We expressed our delight, and promised to be very attentive.

"You must know," he commenced, "that it is now about five years ago that I was in command of the brig 'Prince,' belonging to the West India Company, and bound for Curaçoa. We had favourable winds for several days; and I should think that we had already made some way. One day, being asleep in my cabin, I was awakened by some one calling me.

"'What is it?' I cried out. 'Who is there?'

"'It's Sander,' was the reply.

" 'What's the news?'

" 'Don't you hear?' he asked, 'a storm is coming on.'

" I hurried up from the cabin, and found the rain descending in torrents.

" 'Did you ever see such rain before?' asked Sander.—Sander was my second mate, and a fine lad.

" 'Well,' said I, 'are you afraid of a little rain, man?' but, meanwhile, I donned my great coat and sou'-wester.

" I looked at the clock: it was five o'clock in the morning, but no sign of coming daylight was to be seen on the horizon. Meanwhile the rain poured down with unabated violence; the sky was black as ink; but, strange to say, on the surface of the waters it was as clear as daylight.

" 'Ship ahoy!' cried the watch.

" I took my night-glass, and saw a galleon, apparently of Spanish build; I could clearly distinguish her masts and rigging. But I did not long stand looking, for I was not at my ease with the weather. The rain ceased, but the clouds were sinking lower and lower. To the south-east, as far as the eye could reach, the waves were white with foam; and we heard a dull rumbling under the water, as if an earthquake were at hand. Meanwhile, far in the distance, the rain still continued falling in showers; but about a quarter of an hour afterwards, as the wind grew stronger, the great drops were scattered in every direction. I hastened to get all sails in, for I mistrusted the elements; and I was right, as you will hear. Some moments afterwards the rain came upon us, and poured down almost perpendicularly; then suddenly it seemed as though it were lifted up, and quickly disappeared in vapour. On our right, however, a long white streak came creeping across the water, like

dust on a country road after a long drought. We heard more and more plainly a dull, rumbling sound, and the ship commenced to sigh and heave, as though she anticipated her fate. All at once a fierce gust of wind struck our sails ; a tremendous wave bounded on deck, and I felt as if I had been slashed in the face with a dozen wet towels. Then there came another wave, and in the twinkling of an eye I was washed overboard. With a splash I was carried away on the top of a foam-capped billow, and ere I had time to say a prayer I sank. But I soon again rose to the surface, and now I saw my vessel a good way off, dancing about on the waves like a young horse gone mad ; and I knew very well that in such weather the crew could send out no boat in search of me. Pulver, my boy, thought I, it's all over with you ; say your prayers, and there is an end of it. But just at that moment I felt a great ting at my shoulder, and was pulled back with some force. That's a shark, said I to myself, who wants me for his breakfast ; and I dared not look round from fright ; but, no. ‘Here, old fellow !’ I heard a voice say ; and, looking round, I saw Sander, who, like me, had been washed overboard. But, luckily for him, a big dog-kennel was washed over with him, and he had quickly held on to it. He floated towards me seated on its top, and succeeded in getting close enough to haul me along, so I managed to scramble on its top too. There we sat on our box, drifting farther and farther away from the ship ; but said I to Sander, ‘Be brave, my lad : the good Lord has saved us thus far ; He will preserve us yet.’

“‘The deuce, old fellow !’ said Sander ; ‘just look, there is the Spaniard very close to us.’

“I looked around, and there was our big Don Dancing

on the waters. Meanwhile the storm had somewhat abated, and it was getting tolerably light so that I could easily distinguish the crew on the foreign vessel ; and, happily, we were fast approaching it. They did not observe us, but at that moment I felt a hard substance pressing on my chest, and, putting out my hand, I luckily found my speaking-trumpet. That was a grand discovery. I immediately put it to my mouth, and began to halloo as if twenty-five sucking-pigs were being slaughtered, and until I was out of breath. Then Sander took a turn at it, and then I followed it up again, until at length they heard us on board of the Spaniard, and directed their glasses on us. They saw us ; the weather had grown calm, a boat was sent out ; and in less than a half-hour we stood on the deck of the galleon. The ship came from Cadiz, and was bound for Cartagena, where, I believe, she had to deliver money. I sailed with the Don, and had to lend a hand during my passage. Now and then I got a small plate of lentils, for which Esau would not have given a half-penny, much less his birth-right. But that did not signify ; and I was glad enough to have had such a narrow escape. The only thing that annoyed me was, that I was drifting away so far out of my course, and I was in a fix how I should return from Cartagena ; for to Cartagena I was obliged to go. A ship is not like a canal boat, and does not stop on the road to land passengers.

"About six days after we had come aboard of the Don, a large vessel was in sight, which came toward us in full sail. She was a corvette ; and, as far as we could judge, well built and well manned too, for she cut through the waters most admirably. But, pretty as she was, we did not feel greatly charmed with her

appearance ; she showed no colours, and there was something arrogant about her, as much as to say : What do you want in my waters ? As for the Don, he was of the same opinion ; he shook his head suspiciously, and had all sail clapped on, so as to get out of our friend's way. But the corvette seemed bent upon our company, and continued sailing behind us, like a groom behind his master. The Don pulled a wry face. He perceived that the corvette was too polite for him ; and he cast his eye along his crew, as though he wished to make sure that he could rely upon them in case the stranger should have any evil intentions. Then he called out to me—

“ ‘ Can you fire a musket ? ’ he asked.

“ ‘ I should think so,’ I answered ; ‘ and I can handle a handspike too ! ’

“ ‘ All right,’ said he. ‘ Then I’ll just see whether you can earn your victuals ! ’

“ At the same time he made all his men come on deck and prepare for fight. The guns were loaded, the muskets brought forward, the balls laid handy, and each man was provided with a poniard in his belt. But whilst we were making these preparations, we saw a little flame on the other ship, and a ball came upon us, sending our topgallant mast by the board.

“ ‘ That’s an unmannerly fellow ! ’ I remarked, ‘ but he knows how to aim ! ’

“ ‘ We cannot get out of her way,’ said Don Ricardo ; ‘ but we’ll show her that we can also do something.’

“ Meanwhile the corvette bore steadily down upon us, and we were soon able to distinguish the crew on deck —and unfriendly enough did they look : the whole craft bristled with handspikes, boarding-pikes, and axes. ¶ It’s a

'freebooter,' I remarked to Don Ricardo, as I stood, musket in hand, on deck. In reply he pointed to a red rag which was being hoisted on board the pirate. The next moment the royal flag of Spain was flying at our mast.

"'Fire !' cried Don Ricardo, and in a moment six guns went off one after another, hitting the freebooter so square on the bow that the white splinters were scattered far and near. Now the corsair buffed round, and he gave us a pummelling. Down came our fore-mast, rigging and all, and fell with a great splash into the sea. But, through the sudden movement of the vessel, we had drifted away a little from our foe, and as the wind was high, we might have been able to escape. However, ere we had time to make preparations, the pirate fell upon us in the rear and repeated his polite salute, causing the utmost confusion on our deck. The next moment our opponent had attached her grapping-irons to our ship, and we were hooked on to each other. In the twinkling of an eye more than fifty pretty fellows made their appearance in the midst of the smoke and fire to pay us a friendly visit. We gathered round the Don and the Spaniards, who went bravely to work to give them a welcome, and who repaid our friend's politeness with interest; whilst Sander and myself also showed that we could do something more than eat lentils. But all at once the pirate captain sprang upon us, and a formidable fellow he was. A tall handsome man, with the mien of an admiral and with eyes like coals of fire. 'Carracho !' he exclaimed;—I believe that is the Spanish for surrender! Well, he needed not much eloquence to persuade us to do that, for the majority of our sea-lions, together with Don Ricardo,

were already lying stiff on deck ; and the others were in such a condition that they would not have been able to distinguish the moon from a green cheese ! As for myself, a bullet had penetrated my hat, but I did not receive any other wounds."

"Well, that's very strange," observed Susannah, surveying the captain's rotund figure with a smile.

"You mean to say, missy, that my stomach was a fine target to aim at. But such is fate. By my side lay a *señor* who had received three bullets, although the fellow was not much stouter than my left arm. But every bullet has its billet, do you see? Well, the pirate captain now leaped on deck, and brandished a naked sabre in his muscular hand. What could I do? I laid down my handspike and awaited what was to follow. But there was Sander, who felt no inclination whatever to surrender ; and just at the moment when one of those uninvited guests was about to have a grip with him, up he sprang, and fell upon the captain of the pirates, laying about him like a madman. In a moment five or six of our pretty visitors came rushing up, and one of them, grasping him by his arm, was just about to give him a blow with his axe, and send him with his compliments into the next world, when the pirate chief addressed him in Spanish, and commanded him to desist. I thought the boy did better by keeping quiet, so I cried with all my might—

"'Sander, are you mad? What do you want to do?'

"As I spoke the captain looked at me, as I thought, rather kindly ; and then I saw him whisper something to a man next to him.

"Sander and myself, who were the only two left alive

of all our crew, were bound together, taken to the corvette and thrown into the hold. Well, we sailed away, and for about four or five days we remained in that miserable hole without seeing sun or moon ; although, I must say to the credit of the freebooter or his cook, that we got first-class food. At last, I think it was on the sixth day, we were hauled on deck. I looked about me ; but, shiver my timbers, if I knew where we were. We lay at anchor in a narrow strait, of which the water was so clear that I could distinguish the sand on the bottom, and all the fish that swam about in it. To the right and to the left arose steep walls of rock of immense height, everywhere overgrown with trees and shrubs, while in some places the cleft was so narrow that boughs on both sides met, and formed a kind of bower. There were fowls of all varieties, and pigeons, turkeys, ducks, and nightingales were blending their notes harmoniously, while cranes of all hues stood looking composedly at us. But I did not have much time to observe it all at my ease. We were lowered into a boat alongside and taken a good distance from the ship, until we arrived at a spot where the water had made a side cleft in the cliffs. Here there was a landing-place, and we were made to ascend some steep steps in the rock. When we arrived at the summit we had to descend again on the other side. At length we came to a valley which was the usual abode of the pirates ; and a safe refuge it was too, for whoever did not know the entrance to the strait and the path across the rocks would have had trouble enough to find it. Now, we were taken to a large shed guarded by sentinels with loaded guns ; quite an unnecessary precaution, for even if we wanted and had been able to run away, we should not have known which way to take. We remained there some

considerable time, when one day a very pretty little lady, I should say about fourteen or fifteen years of age, with a charming face, and neatly dressed, came to us.

"'Are there no Dutch seamen here?' she asked in very good Dutch.

"Sander and I looked at each other in sheer amazement.

"'At your service,' we said both of us.

"'Will you be kind enough to follow me?' she asked again in the sweetest little voice.

"'With much pleasure,' we answered, for we had had enough of that filthy shed.

"She led the way. The sentinels presented arms to her, as if she were a princess, and we walked behind her across a field until we came upon a very nice little summer-house, half hidden among some lofty cocoa-trees. Here we passed another sentinel. She opened a side door, and we entered a small apartment where we saw a man seated at a table, dressed in a silk dressing-gown, and very busy writing.

"'Here are the two Dutchmen, papa,' said the young girl.

"The gentleman looked up from his papers; it was the pirate himself.

"'What is your name?' he asked me, looking me straight in the face.

"'Harman Pulver,' said I. 'What! the deuce, does your honour also speak Dutch?'

"'You are here to answer, and not to ask questions,' said he gruffly. 'How old are you?'

"'Forty-five,' said I.

"'How did you get on that Spanish ship?'

"'Well,' I replied, 'I'll just tell you that;' and so I told

him the whole affair from beginning to end. He listened very attentively. Then he asked me how long I had been at sea ; whether I had a wife and family at home, and such like. After that he turned to Sander, who had also to give his name and age.

“‘Sander Gerritz,’ said he, ‘you will remain in my service until I find you some other employment. Amelia, take that boy to Diego, and tell him to let him have a suit of clothes, and to teach him his work.’”

At this stage of Pulver’s story I could not help looking at him in surprise.

“‘Amelia,’ I repeated ; “was his daughter’s name Amelia ?”

“Yes,” answered Pulver ; “a pretty name for the daughter of a pirate. Well, at any rate, the girl was very nice and friendly. She tripped out of the room, and Sander followed her, not knowing whether he did right or not, as I could plainly see from the way in which he looked back at me. ‘Now comes my turn,’ thought I.

“‘You, Harman Pulver,’ said the captain, ‘you shall be my second mate, as I lost my last in the fight.’

“‘I thank you very much,’ said I, ‘but I would rather not.’

“Then he made a face as though he would devour me.

“‘What !’ said he ; ‘and why not?’

“‘Well,’ I answered, ‘because . . .’ and at the same time I fumbled in my trousers-pocket, where, in spite of shipwreck and pirates, I still kept a small pocket-Bible, and, opening it, I showed him the eighth commandment.”

“Well done,” said Harriet.

“And how did the pirate take it?” we all asked together.

"Well, better than I had expected. He looked rather sour at first, but still I noticed that it made an impression.

"I am not going to enter into a theological argument with you," said he, "or I could convince you that this article"—he called it an article; the man had evidently not studied the Bible much—"that this article does not apply to my profession. I am a sort of sovereign here, and at war with all nations; only I have a foolish weakness for the Dutch, although they do not deserve it. I grant you an hour to reflect," said he, rising to go.

"And if I do not accept it?" said I.

"Then you'll be hanged," he replied, as coolly as if he had given me my choice between a drop of brandy and a glass of wine, and with these words he walked out.

"I reconciled myself to my fate, and sat down, thinking that I might as well read a chapter in my Bible before I took my departure. Whilst I was so engaged the little lady came tripping in again.

"O captain," said she, "do tell me something about Holland; I do so much like to hear about Holland."

"My dear young lady," said I, "I would do so with pleasure, but I have little time now, for I am going to be hanged in an hour; so I may as well devote my last moments to prayer, and think of my poor wife and six fine little ones, whom I leave behind me," and I felt my eyes beginning to water.

"What!" said she, "have you a wife and children?" and the good soul began also to cry. "And who says you must be hanged? Is it papa?"

"Yes."

"Well, I shall beg and entreat him to spare your life."

" 'My dear young lady,' said I, 'if I wish to remain alive I must take service with your father; and I cannot make it agree with my conscience.'

" 'And why not?' she asked very innocently.

" 'Well, because your father's profession is a very sinful one.'

" She looked hard at me, and said very hurriedly, as though she were afraid of hearing her own words, 'I know it, I know it. Do not talk any more about it. You are right. I am not used to hear the truth. Read on, I shall not disturb you; but I will stay here. I must speak to my father; you are safe.'

" Strange!" remarked Harriet, wiping away a tear; "and how did the father of a girl who spoke like that come to be a pirate?"

" That is what I have always wondered at myself, young lady," said Pulver, "but you shall hear more. Miss Amelia sat down opposite me, with her arms folded on her breast. The hour had scarcely passed when her father again entered the room.

" 'Who told you to come here?' he asked his daughter; 'leave us alone.'

" 'No,' said she, 'I will not, unless you promise me to let this man go. He has a wife and children,' she continued, clasping her hands. 'Do let him go, father dear; you will not refuse your little Amelia?' And thus she went on, caressing him and bestowing on him the sweetest appellations.

" He sat for some time staring sternly before him. At length he appeared to have come to a decision. He took her hand, said something to her in Spanish, and led her out of the room. I heard him give her a kiss

outside. ‘Ah,’ thought I, ‘that is a favourable omen.’ The next moment he returned.

“‘Well!’ said he, ‘have you decided?’

“‘Yes,’ said I.

“‘And what is it? Cut it short, mind. Yes or no?’

“‘No,’ said I.

“‘You choose to be hanged, then?’

“‘No; not if I can help it.’

“‘You perceive that there is no other choice. I cannot very well allow any man who has been here to go away and reveal my place of refuge on his coming home.’

“‘Look here, captain,’ said I, ‘you can safely let me go in the same fashion in which you brought me here. I won’t trouble you with my visits, that I can assure you; and if I wanted to show the way to others, I should have to know it myself first. The deuce, it will be better for you if you grant me my life; you don’t know how I may yet be of service to you. For instance, if those gents of the West India Company should ever get their grip on you, I’ll do you more good by speaking in your favour, than by dangling from one of those trees.’

“He seemed to reflect a moment.

“‘You cannot yet judge of our life here,’ said he.

“Thus speaking, he whistled, and a boy entered, smartly dressed as a sailor, to whom he gave his orders in Spanish.

“‘Follow that lad,’ he said to me, ‘he will take you to the right place.’

“What could I do? I made a bow, and walked behind the little fellow, who took me to a building which

appeared to serve as a dining-hall for the band. And what a motley crew there was! Fellows from all nations: Portuguese, Spaniards, Englishmen; Italians, Frenchmen, and Dutchmen also. And I had to take a seat at their table, and see how they lived. I must say the rascals had meals fit for a burgoimaster; meat and poultry of every description, wine in abundance, and good stuff, too. Said I to myself, 'Pulver, my man, that's all done to tempt you; but they shall not succeed.' Meanwhile some of them sat down near me, and began telling me how well they lived under Don Manuel, as they called the captain, and how foolish I was not to stay with them; at the same time they poured me out cup after cup. But I laughed in my sleeve, and thought: I am not afraid of a drop; I can stand a good deal. Then there was one of them who wanted me to sign a paper, but I threw it right across the table; another made a rush at me, but I knocked him down and gave him such a thump that he did not ask for a second one. The whole lot then fell upon me, and I was bound and thrown into a shed. The next morning four fellows paid me a visit, and commenced blindfolding me. I thought that things looked very suspicious, and that now my time had come, so I determined to die like a man; but no, they led me for about a quarter of an hour across a field, I believe, for I walked on grass; then I was suddenly thrown into a boat, and after some time I made out, from the wind which played about my face, that we were close to the open sea. All at once I felt that I was being dragged on board a ship, and I thought, 'They are going to hang me sailor-fashion now,' but I was wrong: I was led between decks; I heard the anchor weighed, and sail

made. For about twenty days I remained below, without any one saying a word to me. You can imagine how pleasant it was. At last we dropped anchor. I was once more blindfolded, bundled down into a pinnace, and taken on shore. When the bandage was removed from my eyes I found myself in a little coppice. One of the pirates handed me a small bag of money, and said—

“ ‘Take hold of that, and pack yourself off. Follow the first path you get to, and you’ll meet some people. But if you should at any time recognise us, mind you don’t peach on us or track us, or . . .’ ”

“ Here he made a movement with his hands which I understood perfectly well. Off they ran; and I stood alone, looking about me, like a man dropped down from a balloon. Well, I walked straight through the coppice, very anxious to see where that path would lead me, until I came to a sort of cottage, where I found a couple of negroes, who showed me the way to Havannah, which was near enough. I walked into the town, and soon found a place of shelter for the night, at the house of an old Dutchman whom I knew. A few days after my arrival at Havannah I went out for a walk, and met two merchants, in whom I thought I recognised some of Don Manuel’s people. In the harbour I saw a very neat little copper-sheathed brig under Portuguese colours, which seemed to me very suspicious. However, I took care to hold my tongue as long as I stayed there, which, luckily, was shorter than I had expected; for a few days after I availed myself of an opportunity to take ship to Curaçoa, where I was fortunate enough to overtake the ‘Prince,’ which was just weighing anchor as I arrived. You can imagine how

'they all stared when they saw me alive, for they had made sure that I had taken my last dip long ago."

"And have you never since heard anything more of the pirate?" asked Susannah.

"No, neither did I desire to renew his acquaintance. But I fancy that about a year after I had seen him he disappeared, at least I never heard more about him; but there were afloat a good many rumours about another pirate, a certain Black Peter."

"Is Black Peter the same man who is said to wander about near here?" asked Harriet.

"Come," said Susannah, "do not let us talk any more about thieves and pirates, or we shall have the nightmare. But have you never heard of your friend Sander, captain?"

"No, and I am afraid he has taken a liking to a pirate's life; he always was a devil-may-care sort of fellow."

The captain's story had made me thoughtful. The little that he had said about Don Manuel and his daughter, and the name of Amelia which he had given to the latter, excited strange suspicions in my mind.

The conversation now became general. Pulver was loud in his praises of my aunt's wine, declaring that he had not tasted such good stuff since his imprisonment by the pirate. Old Mr. Blaek's conversation was very pleasant and sensible, and he made a much better impression upon me than he did on the day when I first saw him. Still it seemed to me as though he were stricken by some intense sorrow, for his genial manner became occasionally clouded by a gloomy sadness; in fact, he had the appearance of a man who was agitated

by remorse. My aunt was very vivacious, and formed all kinds of schemes for pleasant entertainments for the future ; Susannah threw in an occasional joke, and Louis Blaek appeared to devote more than usual attention to his cousin.

We were at dessert, and Mr. Blaek was just telling us of the daring robberies which had lately been committed in the neighbourhood, when a servant whispered to me that a gentleman was outside who desired to see me.

I made my excuses to the company, left the room and entered the parlour, unable to divine who could think of visiting me at my aunt's house ; but who can depict my astonishment when I recognised in the person who was waiting for me Black Peter *in propria persona* !

XI.

"WHAT ! you here !" I exclaimed.

"I risk nothing, Mr. Huyck," he replied, "for I know that you are not the man to betray me."

"Still I cannot imagine what you may wish to say to me."

"In the first place, I must, as in duty bound, thank you for the silence which you have kept about our meeting."

"You would do better," said I, "to abandon altogether your profession, or you will come to no good end."

"Alas ! sir," he replied, with a deep sigh, "does it always depend on us to choose our profession ? Can I go against fate ? How could I, after all that has happened, enter on a better path, and sail under a better flag ? Would you, for instance, employ me as a groom if I asked you ?"

"You know," said I, smiling at the supposition, "that one does not engage a groom without first looking at his certificates of character ; and I doubt whether yours would satisfy me."

"You should not be too sure of that, sir," answered he, whilst he produced a leathern note-book from his pocket, out of which he took some papers. "What do you think of this certificate, sir ?"

I took it, and read, not without surprise, a declaration, written in Spanish, and signed by the Count of Talavera,

testifying to the irreproachable conduct and zeal shown by Sander Gerritz, of Amsterdam, whilst in his service.

"Is this a genuine signature?" I asked, returning him the paper.

"The signature of the Count of Talavera is well known both among our merchants and at our public offices. But here are more documents, all from sailors, such as Captain Slingerford, Captain Blueflag, Captain Setsail, Captain Pulver . . ."

"We could at once get that last signature examined," said I, "for the captain is at this moment in the dining-room."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Sander, quickly removing his papers from the table; "I should like to have a look at the old man, but you know I do not want to see any former acquaintances, as they might feel inclined to blab about things which I would rather keep to myself."

"May I ask you whether you have not among your documents a paper signed by a certain Don Manuel?"

Sander gave me a penetrating glance.

"Ah!" said he, after a short pause, "you know as well as I do, sir, that such a paper is among them, although his name sounds somewhat grander. However, you can well understand now that I dare not sail under my own flag, so I am compelled to hoist false colours. Accordingly I have assumed the name of Joachim Hair-brain for the present."

"My father is an honourable man: if you went straight to him, and frankly told him your story, he would probably be able to get you a pardon for what you have done, and improve your prospects."

"Though the ship be never so rotten and the breakers never so fierce, the sailor will not attempt to save his life

by leaping overboard when he sees sharks near. I thank you, Mr. Huyck, but I have too much respect for my neck to accept your proposal. My intention is to go to Russia or Norway, and try if I can be of use there; for that lurking behind the bushes and picking of locks is no work for one who has had the command of a corvette."

"May Heaven assist you," said I; "but have you anything further to say to me? The company is awaiting me, and . . ."

"And the society of a vagabond like me is not very pleasant to you: I can understand that. I shall cut my tale short; I wish to offer you this trifle as a token of my gratitude."

As he spoke, he offered me a ring set with fine brilliants.

"No, thank you," I said; "I have no guarantee that you have any right to give me that ring, and besides I do not wish to be under any obligations to you."

"The ring belongs to me," said Sander; "I took it with my sword from a corsair, who came marauding in our waters. But if you do not desire it, I must remain your debtor. Twice you have met me; again I will rely on your discretion."

"I will promise you to keep your secret for another twenty-four hours; but after that I shall think it my duty, as an honest citizen, to make known your hiding-place."

"In twenty-four hours' time you may, for my part, cry from the house-tops that Sander Gerritz, Joachim Hairbrain, and Black Peter are one and the same person."

"So be it; but you had better go now. I hear the guests moving in the next room."

"One more request, sir; perhaps you know a certain poet named Lucas Helding?"

I told him I did.

"Well, may I ask you to hand him this money? The man is in needy circumstances, and I know that it will not come amiss."

At the same time he produced a small bag of money, which he offered to me.

"What!" I exclaimed in surprise, "does Helding too belong to the band?"

"No, sir; but I knew him of old, and I am aware that his only means of subsistence are the scraps which the rich throw him, as they would do to a favourite dog. I have sufficient for my journey, and can well spare this trifle."

"Pardon me," said I, "but if the old man knew whence this money came he would never accept it."

"The deuce take your scruples," remarked Sander, biting his lip; "the man from whom I took this sum was a stranger, to whom I cannot return it, as I don't know his whereabouts. I wish to part with it; and I cannot do better than spend it in charity."

"You would do better," I replied, "to return it to the man from whom you stole it."

"Listen, sir, and then judge me. Six years ago, before I took sail with Captain Pulver, I was acquainted with Helding's daughter, an angel of purity, the delight of her father and of all who knew her. We loved each other; she was to become my wife as soon as I should be a pilot. The evening before my departure, when we were alone together . . ."

Here he burst out sobbing.

I was touched at the emotion of the man who, in

spite of his misdeeds, was not quite bereft of generous feelings.

"I understand," said I, "you were rather bold, or she was perhaps too weak."

"Yes, sir. I went on my voyage, and had to struggle with much adversity. I was made prisoner by pirates, and, out of sheer necessity, entered their service. I soon secured the confidence and favour of the captain, who promoted me to the rank of lieutenant. It would take too long to relate now why he left us, and how it was that I assumed the name of Black Peter, making that name as famous as that of Don Manuel had been. But fortune turned against us at last; I was taken prisoner, but escaped, and made my way to a Dutch vessel. At Helvoet, however, I was recognised; I fled from the rascals who were after me, and since then I have led a wandering life. I had been a pirate and became a highwayman, but I soon grew weary of such a life. Meanwhile, I tried my best to obtain news of Clara Helding; I heard that she had left her father, had gone from bad to worse, and was leading a life of profligacy. I know that this is not wholly my fault, and yet it seems to me as though I had been the cause of all her misery. Now do I not owe the old man some amends?"

Sander related his story in a trembling voice, whilst on his countenance I saw the same traces of strong emotion which had attracted my attention at church in the morning.

"If all this be true, you will be the last person from whom Helding will accept anything," I replied.

"Never mind. Helding does not know who sends him this money. Once more I entreat you to give it to the old man."

"Have you no other means of sending it to him?" I asked, somewhat perplexed, for I heard the company coming out of the dining-room.

"Amongst my acquaintance are not many honest folks. Here lies the money; I shall not take it up again; you will undertake to forward it."

"Really," I continued, "it is a commission which I cannot reconcile with my conscience."

"Your servant, sir. May Heaven bless you," and with a bow he opened the door and quitted the house, leaving me no choice but to take up the money and rejoin the company.

On returning to the dining-room door I found myself face to face with Pulver, who seemed quite bewildered and amazed.

"Pardon me, Mr. Huyck," he said, "who was that man who gave you this small bag? I am sure I have seen him before under very different circumstances."

"I cannot tell you now," said I; "but I will do so on some future opportunity."

In the evening, as we were taking tea, I turned the conversation on Spanish affairs, and took an opportunity to inquire whether any one had ever heard of the Count of Talavera.

At this question it seemed to me as though Mr. Blaek changed colour; he affected not to hear it, but Van Baalen quickly replied—

"Who has not heard of the Count of Talavera? He was a Knight of the Golden Fleece, a Spanish Grandee, Admiral of Castile, a favourite of the King of Spain; and, in short, fortune's darling. But he fell into disgrace, and ran away. No one knows what became of him."

"I remember now that I have heard of the man before," I said.

"Be quiet," whispered my aunt, touching Van Baalen's elbow.

"I may add," he continued, quite regardless of her hint, "that he is a Dutchman by birth, and commenced his career in our country's service. Mr. Blaek will recollect the Baron Van Lintz?"

"I, sir?" asked Mr. Blaek, the tea-cup trembling in his hands. "Excuse me . . . no; . . . I do not remember him at all."

"No! Is he not then . . . Oh! how can I be so stupid?" said Van Baalen; "I had really forgotten that you are some connection of that gentleman. I beg your pardon for the mistake which I have made."

I was as wise as ever. I looked round: Mr. Blaek had scarcely recovered from his agitation, and Van Baalen continued to make his excuses. Harriet raised her handsome eyes inquiringly to each of us in turn; my aunt offered some refreshments, and did her best to change the conversation; Louis Blaek hummed a French song, and Susannah began with another sally.

As for Pulver, he was enveloped in such a cloud of tobacco smoke that it was impossible to see his features.

As is usually the case after a similar incident, the conversation now began to flag, and it was a real pleasure to me when the tea-table was cleared, and we all took a walk in the village, where a fair was held that evening.

About nine o'clock the four gentlemen took their leave and drove away.

XII.

THE following morning it was with a heavy heart that I saw my aunt's chaise before the door, which was to take me away from a place where I left some fair lady who, despite our brief acquaintance, had become inexpressibly endeared to me. I could postpone my departure no longer, for I had that very day to enter the firm of Van Baalen as a partner. I arrived at home in high spirits, and, after having embraced my mother, and delighted the younger members of the family with a big cake which Susannah had given me for them, I went to the office of Van Baalen, who received me very kindly, and introduced me with due formality to his book-keepers, clerks, and messengers.

As the day wore on, I remembered the message to Helding. At first I intended to intrust Heynz with it, but I renounced this idea, as I was afraid of exciting suspicion. An opportunity was at hand. When it was almost time to close, and the messenger came to inquire whether there were any more orders for him, I took him aside, gave him my instructions, and handed him the money. I stayed a little longer with Van Baalen in order to settle different matters about our partnership, and returned home in a very good humour.

In the evening I had joined our family circle, when there was a ring at the bell, and the next moment

Helding stood before me. Now, I feared, the cloud would burst over my head.

The instant he entered he made a low bow, and commenced to express his gratitude in the most extravagant terms imaginable.

"But, my dear Mr. Helding," said I, "I am at a loss to know what it is you are alluding to; I assure you, your thanks are quite uncalled for."

"Yes," remarked my father, who fancied, Helding came to thank him for the two ducats which he had sent him a few days since in acknowledgment of a poem written in my honour, "you need really not have taken the trouble of coming here for this purpose. The poem with which you honoured us is but poorly paid with such a trifle."

"A trifle, my dear sir!" exclaimed Helding; "really, twenty-five ducats may be a trifle for you, but they are not so to me."

"Twenty-five ducats!" repeated my father; "there must be some misunderstanding; that money does not come from me; and as for my son, I doubt whether his pocket will allow him to be so munificent."

"Ah, my dear sir," resumed the poet, "you are making a mistake. Your son's noble way of giving heightens the value of the gift."

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand giveth," muttered Aunt Lina.

"Any attempt at concealment is in vain," continued Helding; "the affair was nicely arranged, but I have found it out, for all that."

"Pray, let us hear the facts," said my father.

"With pleasure, sir. I was sitting in my top-room with an ode in honour of Mr. Smethof's birthday before

me, and Heynz, my landlord, was with me, just making out a receipt for the quarter's rent, which I had paid him out of the two ducats which you recently sent, when there was a knock at my door; 'Come in,' said I, and a gentleman walked in and asked for me.

"'I am Lucas Helling,' I answered.

"'Then will you take this little bag, and be kind enough to give me a receipt for it?'

"With this he commenced counting out the money on my table. I trembled with agitation.

"'My friend,' said I, 'you must be mistaken; I am expecting no money.'

"'I am not mistaken at all, sir,' he replied, still counting the money and arranging it in heaps, 'if you are Lucas Helling.'

"'But who has sent it?'

"'Oh! I must not tell you that.'

"It seemed to me as if everything were swimming before my eyes when I beheld such a sum of money."

"'Well,' said Heynz, 'I should put it away at all events.'

"I asked Heynz to write the receipt for me, as I was too excited to do anything but stare at the money. This being done, I signed it with a trembling hand, and the man retired.

"'Can you understand it, Mr. Heynz?' said I.

"'No, but it is a windfall on which I congratulate you.'

"'Do you know the man?' I asked again.

"'Oh yes,' he replied, 'he is a messenger at Mr. Van Baalen's office.'

That deuced spy is always spoiling something, thought I.

"On hearing this," continued Helding, "I handed the money to Heynz, requesting him to put it by for me, and I hurried on to Mr. Van Baalen's. But I had scarcely said a few words when I discovered that I had gone to the wrong place.

"'I do not give away my money,' said Mr. Van Baalen, 'but I'll call the messenger.'

"The messenger opened my eyes ; you had given the ducats to him to take them to me."

Here the whole family looked thunderstruck at me.

"I was not aware that your means were so large," said my father, with amazement.

"I am sorry that it has been discovered," I replied; "but I can assure you, Mr. Helding, that I am not the person from whom this money originally came ; the gentleman who intrusted it to me desires to remain unknown."

"And can I make no guess at the donor's name?" asked Helding.

"I assure you," I replied, "that it would be of no avail; I am positively forbidden to give you any hint."

Helding sighed. "In that case," said he, "I must still thank you for the trouble which you have taken."

He soon after retired, but I had more trouble in allaying the suspicions of my father, who could not get over the mystery of the ducats and my connection with the affair.

The next day my fear of discovery was greatly increased. A hamper of fruit and vegetables arrived at our house, as a present from Aunt Louisa, and it contained also the following note from Susannah to me :—

"MASTER FERDINAND,—You have been playing some pretty pranks ; so, you see, my prophecies have been fulfilled ; I knew you would never end well. You

were always looked upon as an eighth wonder in the family ; whilst I, who knew better, was no more believed than the late Miss Cassandra. But so it has always been. When wisdom cries out in the public streets, every one stays at home ; but when folly only just whistles, a crowd gathers at once. You had better take care that the crowd does not come to see you hanged. Fancy ! what a touching spectacle it would be to see the son of a high bailiff dangling from a pole ! Well, don't look so innocent ; the thundercloud has burst. This morning Roggefled comes trudging along to aunt with some cows to sell, and he tells her that a certain Mr. Hairbrain, who lived in his cottage, has run away ; and that, according to the bailiff, this Mr. Hairbrain was . . . well, you can guess it—or, rather, you know it already—the identical Black Peter, and the perpetrator of sundry burglaries and highway robberies. Now, you can imagine how aunt looked, knowing that you were very intimate with that gentleman, and that he paid you visits. She at first intended to write to papa about it ; but I pointed out to her that she would only occasion him needless grief, and that it would be better that I should first lecture you myself on the subject. I can tell you that I shake and tremble at the idea ; and then I hear that Pulver has told aunt that you received a bag of money from that fellow. Are you also a member of the firm of Cartouche & Co.? I had better put Van Baalen on his guard, or who knows, you may break open his safe one day. I have already advised Harriet Blaek to look over her boxes, and see if you have not made away with anything. As far as she is concerned I might forgive you, for that would but be tit-for-tat, seeing that she has proved herself guilty of stealing your heart. Well, you will surely lose

all claim on her heart if you have such acquaintances, but defend yourself if you can, for aunt is in high wrath : a pair of silver sugar-tongs are missing, which she fancies that your friend, that vagabond, has taken away with him, on the occasion of his visit ; or, perhaps, you have pawned them ? You are not a whit too good for it ; that, you know, is the opinion of your sister,—SUSANNAH."

This epistle was not at all calculated to set my mind at rest, and I cursed my rash promise. However, as I saw the necessity of satisfying my aunt, I wrote to Susannah, thanking her for the service which she had rendered me, by giving me such timely information, and especially by dissuading aunt from writing to my father. With regard to the interview with Black Peter, I merely said that the man had handed me some money, and had requested me to send it to a third person ; but that it was a secret in which people were involved whose names I might not mention. "Believe me," I concluded, "that I was not a little surprised at the honour of his visit, and that I wished he had intrusted some one else with his troublesome commission. I did not refuse it, as it was really a restitution which he wanted to make, and because, as I have reason to believe, he is about to leave his shameful profession for ever, and enter on a more honourable career."

I owed a visit to Aunt Lina, and I determined to go to her that evening. I first asked the servant girl who opened the door whether my aunt was engaged, as I knew that she sometimes had a prayer-meeting at her house, and I did not feel in the right humour to enjoy such pious company.

"My mistress," said the servant, "is with a young lady who has just arrived."

I walked upstairs, expecting to meet some pious female ; but who can depict my amazement, when, having arrived in my aunt's back-room, I recognised Amelia Bos in the young lady who was drinking a cup of tea ? As for her, she was no less surprised at my appearance, and the cup nearly fell from her hands.

"Ferdinand !" said aunt, "I did not expect you this evening. You know this young lady, I believe ?"

"Yes, aunt, but I certainly did not think that you knew her also."

"And must we know our neighbour to render him a service ?" asked aunt. "Did the widow of Zarephath know the man of God when she welcomed him in her dwelling ?"

"Far be it from me," I answered, "to doubt your goodwill towards your neighbour ; and yet I am at a loss to know how you became acquainted with this young lady."

"I will tell you. Being at the hosier's this morning, I saw her there with Helding, and he introduced her to me. Seeing that she is like unto Mary, and loves to listen to the voice of truth and piety, I invited her to visit me this evening, and to take part in the edifying instruction which I endeavour, according to my ability, to give to those who thirst for the waters of life."

I could not recover from my astonishment. "What !" thought I, "wherever I go, must I be continually exposed to encounters that can only result in fresh complications ? Has my native city become enchanted during my absence, or have I ? Besides, Amelia is a Roman Catholic. Has she wilfully misled Aunt Lina, who is so steadfast in the faith ? Or is it all a misunderstanding ?"

As for Amelia, although at the first moment she seemed no less confused than I was, she quickly recovered herself.

"The young lady has told me," said aunt, "that you rendered her a great service."

"Yes, Mr. Huyck," said Amelia, helping me out of my embarrassment, "I told your aunt that you were kind enough to rid me of a very troublesome gentleman."

"I did my duty," said I; "and every honourable man would have acted as I did."

"And, I suppose," said my aunt, "the young lady has also told you that she is alone and deserted, like Ruth the Moabitess, without even having a mother-in-law to whom she could say, 'Thy people are my people, and thy God is my God'?"

I was at a loss what to reply. "Do you think, dear aunt," I asked, to help myself out of the difficulty, "that I am fit to advise a young lady?"

Amelia seemed to have discovered why I gave this evasive answer, for she quickly remarked, "Madam, I told your nephew that my position was very unfortunate, for Mr. Bouvelt, at whose house I was to have lodged, cannot receive me, and I cannot return to Deventer, for my family is away from home."

"Tell me, child," resumed my aunt, after a short silence, "do you want advice, or are you in need of money perhaps?—or are you ashamed to speak to me in the presence of my nephew?"

"You are too kind, madam," said Amelia, weeping, "but it is my misfortune, that I may not open my heart to any one, not even to you, gladly as I would do so. I have perhaps told you too much already. Oh! I ought not to have come here."

Aunt Lina looked at her with mingled pity and amazement, and I perceived that she was at a loss how to act. In her quiet and retired life she had had but little opportunity of gaining an understanding of human nature. She daily visited the unfortunate, helping them with hand and heart, but still the griefs which she allayed were generally more or less of a commonplace nature, and she had rarely met with persons whose distress, as was the case with Amelia, sprang from a very unusual source. She glanced at me, for I was standing, hat in hand, uncertain whether I should leave the ladies alone, and risk Amelia's confiding entirely in my aunt, who did not seem to be the right person to listen with heartfelt sympathy to her story.

"I think, ladies," I observed, "that you would both do well to alter the subject of your conversation, and simply talk about embroidery and needlework. I feel convinced that if the young lady has been unhappy in her solitude, it is chiefly because she has had nothing to occupy herself with. Aunt, you could perhaps not render this young lady a greater service than by providing her with some of the work for the poor of which you have always plenty."

"Mr. Huyck has guessed my thoughts," said Amelia hastily, for she understood my meaning. "Oh, I should gladly work for those who need it."

"You shall have work," replied my aunt; "and help me in making clothes. You shall assist me, my child, and we shall work for the benefit of the widows and orphans."

Seeing that everything was now arranged, I took my departure, and left the two ladies to their kind occupations.

XIII.

THE following evening I had occasion to make a call at Helding's with a message from my father. As I left his room and was coming downstairs, I heard my name whispered ; I turned round and beheld Amelia standing on the stairs which led to her room.

"Have you a moment to spare?" she asked softly, and with a slight tremor in her voice.

"Can I be of any service to you?" I faltered, rather annoyed at being perhaps again compelled to interfere in her affairs.

"Follow me," she said, in a tone which was rather commanding than entreating, and, taking hold of my arm, she half dragged me upstairs into her room. A light was on the table. As soon as we were inside, she closed the door, but did not lock it. She then sat down, and motioned me to be seated opposite to her, moving away at the same time a chair which was near her, as though she did not want me to sit down by her side.

"I am very glad to see you," she began, in a hurried manner. "I had been waiting on the stairs for some time, and was afraid that any one else might have seen me there. I want to speak to you very particularly, for I have no one in the whole city in whom I can trust except you."

"I hope," said I, as calmly as I could, "that I shall be able to assist you, but your position is peculiar."

"Well, to make matters short . . . I can no longer remain here."

"And what makes you come to this decision?"

"Listen; I am beginning to fear that a snare was laid for me before I entered this house; . . . that Heynz is a spy, a secret agent of the police."

"I knew it," said I; "but I did not want to alarm you, so I never mentioned it to you."

"What! you knew it? Perhaps you are one yourself? . . . but no, no, your appearance is too honest. . . . I am ashamed that I should harbour such thoughts about you. But listen, and judge of my anxiety. I was just now on the stairs to meet . . ." Here she stopped short, and a crimson blush suffused her cheeks.

"Well! to meet . . .?"

"Never mind. I heard your voice. In short, I was on the stairs; there was a crevice in the woodwork; I looked through it, and in a little room, which I had never before noticed, I saw Heynz in conversation with the same pedlar who brought me to this house."

"Simon? Luckily he does not know you. He never saw you with your father."

"Oh! you are trying to tranquillise me," she said, shaking her head, "but listen. At first I could understand nothing of their conversation, but gradually I began to observe that the pedlar was giving Heynz some information about certain highwaymen who had been seen near Naarden. This already alarmed me, but imagine my terror when, in reply to a question of Heynz, he told him that some one whose hiding-place the police were doing all in their power to discover, and in whom I recognised my own father, according to the description which I heard him give, had been wandering

about in South Holland, had stayed at The Hague, and was expected to arrive to-morrow in Amsterdam by the boat from Utrecht."

"Here! in the lion's den?"

"Fancy how I felt. I only hope that it may not be true, for my father is lost if he comes to this city. His anxiety about me would be the only reason which I can assign for such a hazardous step. Have I not to fear that they want to entice him to this house in order to make him fall into a snare laid for him? Ought I not to leave so dangerous an abode?"

"Pardon me," said I, after a moment's reflection; "have you yourself nothing to fear from the hands of justice?"

"I?" she replied, with evident surprise, "what can I have to fear? Or is it the fashion in this country to extend the enmity against the father unto his children?"

"No," said I; "but measures of precaution may sometimes be taken. . . . I should advise you not to leave this house as yet. If the detectives know nothing, your departure will only tend to excite suspicion, and move them to keener investigations. If they have already discovered the truth, no retirement can avail you any longer. Besides, you yourself appear to be unacquainted with your father's abode, and in case you left this house you could not inform him where you went to. I can give you no other advice than to await the future with resignation."

"With resignation!" she repeated, rising from her seat and walking up and down the room. "Good Heavens! is it possible? This fearful suspense is insufferable."

"Alas!" said I, with a sigh, "what would you have

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me do for you? Even if my position as a son of the high bailiff did not prevent me from actively assisting you, would not regard for our reputation dissuade me from all direct interference in your behalf?"

These were harsh words, and they shocked her deeply; for, stopping short in her walk across the room, she looked at me with eyes sparkling with indignation.

"They told me long ago that I should but find cold hearts in this country. The tongue of slander . . . indeed! These are the pretexts behind which people shelter themselves when there is a question of rendering service to a fellow-creature: they would see a human being drown rather than sacrifice one of their prejudices. But I shall give you no further annoyance, Mr. Huyck. Pray pardon the trouble which I have occasioned you."

"Miss Bos," said I, with some embarrassment, "I have unconsciously given you offence, and, on my honour, I did not intend it. You have, I believe, seen evidence enough of my desire to assist you as far as lies in my power. Really, I pity you most sincerely, and I only wish I knew what I could or might do for you."

"You are right," she said, wiping away a tear; "it is I who am unreasonable. After all you have done for me you deserve something better than reproaches. And your aunt, too, has been so kind to me. Oh, if my father would but allow it . . . how gladly would I make her the confidante of my sufferings. She would aid me, I am certain of that; she would get me out of this house where everything makes me tremble, and deliver me from the intrusions of that Mr. Blaek, who gives me not a moment's rest."

"What!" I exclaimed, "has he made a fresh attempt to see you?"

"It is useless to return him his letters and presents," she replied, "the next day I find them again on my table; he must have accomplices in this house. Look what he dares send me."

As she spoke she passionately drew open a drawer, and produced a handsome necklace, which she laid on the table.

"And then his letters, in which he makes me proposals which I would feel ashamed to repeat. Oh! I am indeed unhappy."

Grief at length triumphed over her strength of mind; she put her handkerchief to her eyes, and sobbed convulsively. I rose from my chair, she stood at my side and unconsciously bowed her head, so that it rested on my shoulder. It was a critical position, and I was thinking how I could best get out of it when I heard footsteps on the stairs.

Amelia stepped aside, trembling violently.

"Good Heavens!" she exclaimed, "would the detectives dare to come here, and at such an hour?"

"This way, Mr. Van Beveren," I heard Heynz say.

The door was opened, and a gentleman in a crimson coat, with powdered hair, and spectacles on his nose, entered the room, followed by Heynz.

"It is I, Amelia," said Mr. Bos; "I did not know," he added reproachfully, "that you had company."

Amelia stood transfixed. She wrung her hands, and looked at her father with eyes full of terror. As for Heynz, he stood laughing behind the back of Mr. Bos, and shook his finger at me; but I did not know whether to ascribe his good-humour to the delight of having in his power a man whom he had so long looked for, or to

a certain roguish pleasure at seeing me so inconveniently surprised by Amelia's father.

"I suppose," continued Bos, "you did not expect me so early; but my business was finished sooner than I expected; besides, as I told Mr. Heynz, I have met with an unpleasant adventure, which compelled me to shorten my journey. I see, too," he added, with a reproachful glance at me, "that it was high time for me to return."

"Pardon me," said Heynz, stepping forward, "this is Mr. Huyck, the son of our respected high bailiff, and an honourable gentleman, whom the young lady need not be ashamed to know."

"I am myself the best judge of the acquaintances fit for my daughter," said Bos, turning to Heynz, and speaking in an authoritative tone; "and as I have to speak to her in private, I will ask you . . ."

Here he pointed to the door with a commanding gesture.

"Certainly," said Heynz, somewhat abashed, "I will not disturb you;" and he left the room. As I stood undecided whether I should follow him or not, Bos said—

"Stay, sir; I have a word to say to you."

"Heavens, father!" said Amelia in a hushed voice, "what have you done, and why do you venture here? Do you know who that man is who has just left the room?"

"I know all," answered Bos, "and I do not think that it is I who have been the most imprudent of us three. But I was rash when I trusted Mr. Huyck."

"Sir," said I, rather piqued, "I have kept your secrets even at the sacrifice of my own comfort."

"I do not allude to my secrets," replied Bos; "I wish to know the meaning of your visit at such an untimely hour, and why these jewels are on the table."

"Mr. Huyck is not guilty, father," said Amelia, ere I had time to answer; "he came here at my request . . . he has nothing to do with these trinkets."

"At your request!" exclaimed her father, more and more annoyed. "Unfortunate man that I am!"

"My presence in this room can be easily explained," said I as calmly as I could; "and if you will allow Miss Bos or myself to tell you what has occurred since our arrival in Amsterdam, you will not be surprised that she felt greatly alarmed, and took counsel with one in whom alone she could place confidence. By putting any other construction on my presence, you would misjudge her as well as myself."

"Very well," said Mr. Bos, as he sat down, "I will listen to you; it would indeed be hard if I were forced to lose my respect for the only being who yet attaches me to life." As he spoke he held out his hand to his daughter, who covered it with kisses. We now gave him a brief account of what had taken place. He made no observation, either during or at the end of the narrative, but merely shook his head thoughtfully at times. At length he kissed his daughter's hand, and from this I inferred that he was satisfied with our explanation.

"And now, sir," I resumed, after a short silence, "I must confess that Miss Bos's alarm is not unfounded, and that your arrival here is not calculated to remove it."

"I am myself as surprised at being here," he replied, "as the Doge was when he found himself at the court of Louis XIV. I have learned by experience, however, that

an audacious boldness will sometimes better mislead people than the cleverest stratagem. Since your departure, Amelia, I have been very uneasy at receiving no reply from you, especially as I wrote to you twice, under cover to Bouvelt, to say that I was staying at The Hague with the Russian Ambassador . . . ”

“ Which letters,” I remarked, “ are probably still lying unopened at the notary’s, for he is dangerously ill.”

“ Meanwhile,” continued Bos, “ I had observed that my movements were being watched by the same pedlar whom I saw in the inn at Zoest. I was so anxious that I could no longer withstand the desire of hearing something about you. To Mr. Huyck I dared not write ; he has had trouble enough with us already. At length I resolved to make my way hither. But first I had to give the slip to my troublesome satellite, the pedlar. Yesterday, being at Utrecht, he was at my heels again. On meeting him in the street, I asked him if he would go a message for me. I gave him some money to pay my cabin fare to Amsterdam by the next boat. His eyes sparkled with joy ; and I felt certain that he would at once carry the joyful news of my intended journey to his employer. I walked to Zoest, where I took a carriage as far as Amersfoort, and waited there for the arrival of the Deventer coach, which took me to Amsterdam. On the road I changed my dress completely, powdered my hair, and rendered myself still less recognisable by putting on a pair of spectacles. Arrived in town, I put up at a good hotel under the name of Van Beveren, and went straight to Bouvelt’s, where I was informed of your abode. As soon as I heard the name of Heynz my plan was formed. I was aware, never mind how, that this man was connected with the secret police ; and knowing that nothing

was better calculated to mislead even the sharpest people than to flatter their vanity, I went to see him before I came here. I told him that I was Amelia's father, the merchant from Deventer, whom Bouveld had mentioned to him. I also told him that I had been robbed by a rogue, whom I described so exactly that his portrait completely corresponded to that of the man who attacked you near Naarden; and I added that he, Heynz, had been recommended to me as the ablest person to discover such scoundrels. I ended my narrative by handing him a suitable present, and I trust that I have now duped him."

"But, papa," said Amelia, "although you may mislead Heynz, are you not afraid that there may be persons in Amsterdam who will recognise you?"

"Who can now recognise in me the gallant young midshipman, who, five-and-twenty years ago, sauntered along the streets of Amsterdam?"

"No one would at first sight; but it may happen when it becomes known that you are staying here. Besides, this city is full of foreigners, who may have met you abroad in former days."

"I do not intend to show myself in the streets more than is necessary. At all events, I have resolved to run the risk. Here there are greater facilities than anywhere else for embarking for our destination. Besides, I was no longer safe even out of Amsterdam; for I know that the Spanish Ambassador insists on my extradition, and that the States-General, who are otherwise so proud of their national privileges, will meet the wishes of their ally. I shall leave as soon as I am in possession of those fatal documents."

"And must I remain here?" asked Amelia.

"Why not? I have asked Heynz if he could provide me with a lodging; and as there is a little cabinet adjoining this room, where a bedstead may be placed, this can easily be arranged. For to-night I shall return to my hotel. As for those trinkets, you can put them aside; I shall see that they are returned."

I was now about to retire, but Mr. Bos asked me to accompany him, as he was going my way. We took leave of Amelia and left the house together. For some moments we walked side by side. Then Mr. Bos said—

"I owe you much gratitude, but I shall be still more thankful to you if, for the future, you will kindly cease your visits."

"Sir," I replied coldly, "although I pity your fate and your daughter's, I desire nothing better than to hear no more of you; your affairs have already caused me enough annoyance."

"We understand each other perfectly then. However, we part in friendship. I look upon you as a man of honour, and it is only because I know how dangerous it is for young people to see each other frequently, especially in this mysterious fashion, that, as a parent, I feel some anxiety."

"Sir, I may tell you that my affections are placed elsewhere."

A silence now ensued, which was not disturbed until we approached the door of the hotel. He then laid his hand on my shoulder, and remarked, "My young friend, hitherto my life has been a perpetual alternation of fortune and adversity, of power and humiliation, of wealth and misery; but if ever I should again be in a position to do good to others, be assured that my gratitude to-

wards you will show itself by something more than empty words, and that I shall endeavour to make amends for the trouble which I have unwillingly given you."

With these words he left me, and I continued my way in no very pleasant mood, wishing that I had never become acquainted with Mr. Bos, Mr. Van Beveren, or whatever might be his name, and yet I was anxious to know how it would all end with him and his amiable daughter. What vexed me most of all, however, was the false position in which I had been placed. I felt almost certain that already my father harboured strange suspicions.

I did not know how to get out of the dilemma, for, on the one hand, it was against my filial love to disguise the truth; and, on the other hand, my promise bound me to silence.

I returned home late, and told my father that I had met at Helling's house one of my acquaintances named Velters, whom I had accompanied part of the way, and that this had delayed me. During the night the thought continually tortured me that I was compelled to keep a secret from my parents, in whom I had hitherto placed a loving and well-deserved confidence. At length I firmly resolved that, whatever might be the consequences, I would endeavour and convince my father that, having once pledged my word, I could not break it, even to justify myself in his eyes.

After dinner, the following day, when Heynz had just paid his customary visit, I walked into my father's study. I purposely availed myself of this opportunity, as I wished to find out whether Mr. Bos had been discovered, for then I could confess everything, and perhaps render the latter some service. My father soon perceived from my

demeanour that I had something on my mind, and, putting his papers aside, he asked me with more than his usual affability—

“Have you anything to say to me? If so, I shall leave these things alone for a moment. I have not much time, however, for I expect a visitor.”

“I have but a few words to say, father,” I replied, “although I should wish our interview to be more prolonged.”

“What do you mean? That sounds somewhat vague and obscure.”

“You have, no doubt, already observed that something weighs me down. At times I am very reserved and absent-minded, and if you had watched my movements, they would perhaps have excited your suspicions. Since my return to my native land I have met with some extraordinary adventures, and what pains me most is that I may not explain matters to you as I should wish.”

“I cannot judge why you bound yourself to secrecy,” said my father. “I must call your attention to the danger of entering on such an obligation. There are few things which a child may not explain to his parents. Only when the secrets of a stranger are involved there may be an exception to this rule; but any secret which does not concern you personally cannot, I imagine, have influenced you to such an extent as your manner has of late led me to presume.”

“It is a secret of a stranger,” I answered, highly pleased that my father himself held out a reason for my silence; “but a secret in which, by a concourse of circumstances, I have become involved.”

“And . . . ,” asked my father, after a moment’s reflection, “does this secret also concern a certain Black

Peter? I ask you this as your father, not as the high bailiff."

"But very indirectly," I replied, inferring from this question that my father knew nothing as yet about the real state of affairs; "but allow me to ask you also something. Suppose Black Peter had saved my life, and I knew his hiding-place, would you consider it my duty to reveal it to the high bailiff?"

"You know where Black Peter is?" asked my father, with a start.

"No," I answered, smiling, "and I am under no obligation to him; but I only offer it as an instance."

"You know well enough," said my father, "that although gratitude is but an *officium imperfectum*, whilst assisting the cause of justice is an *officium perfectum*, the lesser duty would in this case have to yield to the greater, as gratitude has been ordained by a power higher than earthly legislation. However, if you have a secret which you may not confide to me, why did you speak to me about it? I now cannot help making conjectures."

"Because the idea has become unbearable to me that you might accuse me of want of confidence in you; therefore I ask you not to judge me until the time comes when I shall be enabled to give you a full explanation of my conduct."

"You have acted rightly. I would, indeed, be a bad judge if I condemned you without allowing you time for preparing your defence. Assure me only that your secret is not calculated to injure the interests of the State."

"The safety of the State is in so little danger," I answered with a smile, "that I am convinced that you yourself will justify my silence."

At this moment a carriage stopped before our house, and then there was a ring at the bell.

"Is it already so late?" remarked my father, looking at his watch. "Well, now, you must go, for I expect a visitor; or stay here, I shall go into the parlour. The gentleman whom I expect is an important personage, and must be received as such."

With these words he hurried to the parlour, but the visitor whom he expected had not arrived. As I afterwards learned, it was only a detective who had been standing on the quay, watching the arrival of the boat from Utrecht, in order to arrest Mr. Bos, who did not make his appearance. The detective, therefore, came to my father to report the miscarriage of the scheme, and the matter ended for the present with a scolding to Simon for having allowed himself to be duped.

XIV.

THE following morning I went to Heizicht with a beating heart. I found there Harriet Blaek, and was asked by my aunt to account for my interview with Black Peter. I had prepared myself for this emergency, and managed to give her a satisfactory explanation of his visit without telling her the whole truth. After dinner, my aunt, Susannah, Harriet, and myself drove to a farm of Mrs. Van Bempden, near Naarden, where we intended to spend the evening. On our arrival I was not a little surprised to observe that the woman who waited for us at the door was old Martha, and that it was in her cottage that I had been received by Mr. Bos. It now appeared to me plain enough why the old woman had looked at me so closely, and I felt surprised that I had not recognised her, as she had once been housekeeper at my late uncle's.

We all sat down in the garden, whilst Martha went inside the house to prepare some refreshments. On her return, my aunt asked her whether her son was at home.

"Madam," replied the old woman with a sigh, "my son has gone. I have not seen him for a week; where he is, Heaven knows."

I was not ill-pleased at this news. I considered the presence of Andrew at the farm as highly dangerous both to the neighbourhood and to my aunt, and I deter-

mined to inform her of the doings of that individual. I soon found an opportunity of speaking to Martha alone.

"Is it really true," I asked her, "that your son has disappeared?"

"As true as I live, sir," she said, trembling violently.
"For Heaven's sake, don't ruin me!"

"I believe," said I, "that it will be advisable for him to stay away, for it is well known that he is one of Black Peter's band; if he is caught he will not escape the gallows."

"Oh, Mr. Huyck, you've no idea what I've had to suffer from that boy. He never would do any good; but it really isn't my fault: I've scolded him enough." Then, in a whisper, she continued, "You've not told your aunt, sir, that you have slept here, or whom you saw?"

"Not at all," I replied; "but tell me, how do you know those people?"

"How do I know them? Have I not nursed the squire with my own milk, and when Captain Reefsail lived at Graveland, was it not at my house that he always came to see sweet Katy Reefsail? But I must take the tea things outside," and with this she turned away.

I now went back to the ladies, whom I found seated at a table, under the shadow of an old oak.

"Well," said Susannah, "where have you been to now? You are a nice cavalier to leave us alone, when every nook and corner is alive with thieves and highwaymen. But then your aid would give us but little benefit, as you belong to the fraternity."

"I thought, Susan, we should have no further talk on that subject," remarked my aunt.

"Do you observe," I said to Harriet, "how my sister

"ill-treats me? you, who are so good, would surely not tease a brother if you had one?"

"How do you know that I am so good?" she replied, with a laugh. "Just ask Louis; he will tell you whether I try his temper sometimes."

"Yes," said Susannah; "but there is no pleasure in teasing Louis, for he gets so cross; and I must say to my brother's credit that he takes it all in good part."

"That is the best thing you have said of me for a long time," I replied; "I must kiss you for that."

"Get away!" said Susannah, pushing me back. "Use your mouth, but not your hands."

"Well, I want to use my mouth," said I, kissing her.

"Harriet! come to my aid," said Susannah; "you are sitting there without troubling yourself about the fate of your ill-treated friend."

"I shall take very good care not to interfere," replied Harriet.

"What is the matter, children?" asked my aunt, who had been talking to Martha; "if you go on so we shall never get our tea."

"Ferdinand is teasing me," said Susannah.

"One teases whom one loves," remarked aunt.

"If that be true, ladies," said I, looking at Harriet, "the more you tease me, the more I shall like it."

We passed the time in pleasant chat, and afterwards I took a walk with my aunt, of whom I asked whether old Martha had not formerly been housekeeper at Heizicht.

"Yes," she replied, "until her husband died. She lived then in the village, and afterwards, when I bought the farm, I allowed her to live in the farmhouse."

The conversation having turned on the subject of the Blaek family, my aunt remarked, "You are aware that

Harriet has no means whatever ; she is entirely dependent, on her uncle's kindness . . . and she has good reason, too, to be grateful to him ; for he could not love her more tenderly, or treat her with more consideration, if she were his own daughter. I trust she will do as he wishes and marry her cousin. Why did you cough ? ”

“ Did I cough, aunt ? ”

“ Yes, you did. Would you think it so ridiculous if she married Louis, or if Louis married her ? ”

“ What shall I say ? I do not think that they are very much in love with each other, and at all events I know of some one with whom I would rather see her mated.”

“ And who may that gentleman be ? ” asked aunt, with a scrutinising glance at me. “ Not yourself, I hope ? ”

“ And what if it were myself, aunt ? ”

“ Ferdinand, you terrify me. She is a nice girl enough, but what would your parents think of me if I wanted to arrange a match between you ? As for your father, he would but half approve of it. No, I should give up this idea for the present, if I were you.”

Here we were interrupted by Susannah, who called out to us—

“ Come here and see what a beautiful view there is from this spot.”

We hurried forward, and were soon standing beside the young ladies, admiring the charming landscape below. On the one side, as far as the eye could reach, the undulating valley spread before us like a velvety carpet, whilst the foliage of occasional groups of oaks, tinted with the rich colouring of the autumn season, varied the monotony of the extensive meadow-lands. To the south-west appeared the towers of Naarden, a little

farther those of the towns of Weesp and Muiden, whilst Amsterdam was half-screened from sight by a curtain of grey mist; to the east lay the pretty village of Huizen, and on the north the hill descended in a gentle slope until it reached the sea-shore. A number of vessels of all kinds and sizes were cruising in the distance; a little nearer lay a few smacks, from which fishermen could plainly be seen casting their nets. Close to the shore an elaborately gilt and newly painted pleasure yacht lay at anchor, its slender mast and snowy sails standing out in bold relief against the green water and the clear sky.

"I really think it is Louis' yacht," said Harriet, after a short survey of the vessel.

"It seems a well-built vessel," I remarked; "I suppose it sails along pretty fast."

"Yes," answered Harriet; "at least so Louis says."

"Have you never been on board of it yourself? Or don't you like sailing?"

"Louis has never asked me to accompany him."

"That's very natural," remarked Susannah; "gentlemen have too much pleasure amongst themselves to invite ladies."

"It appears Mr. Blaek is on board himself," I continued; "at least there's some one on deck."

"Indeed he is," said Harriet. "There are two gentlemen with him. Do you see them? They are looking at us with their glass."

In another moment we could see three persons leap into a pinnace, and then with vigorous strokes come rowing towards us. They soon reached the shore, fastened their boat, and approached us with hasty steps. We now recognised Louis Blaek and his two friends, of whom one

was a certain Mr. Reynhove, and the other a German merchant, called Weinstube. They had come to invite us to take a little trip on board the yacht. This was too friendly a proposal to be refused ; the young ladies especially were delighted, and we quickly agreed to accompany them and to make the most of the beautiful weather.

As soon as we were on board the yacht, Louis weighed anchor and had all sails set, as he wished to avail himself of a gentle southerly breeze, which moved us slowly against the tide. Louis, in a captain's attire, and with a short pipe in his mouth, stood at the helm, and seemed to trouble himself but little about our presence. Reynhove, on the other hand, quickly fetched all the folding chairs from the cabin and placed them on deck for the ladies, whilst Jack, the mate, brought up a table, and Weinstube uncorked a couple of bottles and filled some glasses.

"Won't you take a glass of wine, Miss Blaek ?" asked the latter, with a strong German accent, addressing Harriet, who sat gazing at the slowly receding coast.

"Pray accept a glass, madam," said Reynhove to my aunt. "On board such an offer may not be refused ; when one sees so much water all around, one may well take a glass of wine."

The conversation grew less formal. Susannah appeared to be determined to make Reynhove the butt of her witticisms, but he took them very good-humouredly —indeed it seemed to me that they rather amused him. Weinstube showered a torrent of insipid compliments on Harriet Blaek, whilst I tried in vain to get in a word.

Meanwhile we had sailed some distance, and found ourselves very close to the village of Muiderberg, when

Harriet asked Louis Blaek a question, which, simple as it was, was the cause of a most unpleasant adventure.

"To whom does that handsome yacht belong behind us?" she asked.

"The deuce!" said Louis, "to whom does she belong, Jack?"

"That is John Pergen's new yacht," replied the sailor; "he wants to get ahead of us, don't you see?"

"Ahead of us!" cried Louis. "No, that he shall not! . . . we'll give him a lesson."

"Mr. Blaek," said I, "it is getting late, and the ladies would like to land. What does it concern you whether the yacht gets ahead of us or not? She is making sail for Amsterdam, whilst we must keep towards Naarden."

"What does it concern me?" repeated Louis, turning the helm with all his might. "Jack, my lad, look out. What does it concern me? Well, if I were to steer towards the shore, he would think I was afraid of him."

"Mr. Blaek," said my aunt, somewhat perplexed, "we should like to return; you are too polite to refuse the request of ladies."

"I should really be compromising my honour, madam, if I turned back now. Jack, tauten the foresail a little."

Here he looked behind him, with an expression of terror, as if he were pursued by a pirate.

"The lesson will only last ten minutes, madam, simply to show my superiority; and then we shall sail back with all speed towards the farm."

"Oh! now we are going at a nice rate; that is what I call sailing," said Harriet and Susannah both together. They were rather pleased to see with what a speed Blaek's vessel cut the waves, and did not mind returning home an hour later.

As for myself I was not satisfied with Louis' reply ; for I knew that the more the wind was now in our favour, the more trouble we should have in sailing back ; and my uneasiness increased when I saw some ugly clouds appear on the horizon.

"Do you not see that there is a storm approaching ?" I said to the sailor almost in a whisper, not wanting to alarm the ladies.

"We'll have a good drenching," answered Jack ; "but what are we to do? Master cannot allow Pergen's yacht to get ahead of us."

"Mr. Reynhove," said I, approaching him, "have you sufficient influence with Mr. Blaek to induce him to turn back ?"

"But have you not heard yourself that the ladies are amused at the race ?"

"'Tis possible, but," I whispered, "there is a storm brewing ; and we are sailing right to meet it."

"Do you think so ?" he inquired, rather abashed ; "but we can easily find shelter somewhere. Meanwhile I shall ask him. I say, Blaek."

"Out of the way," cried Louis without listening to him.

"Look here," said Reynhove peevishly, "don't you see that a storm is coming on ?"

But Louis merely kept his eyes fixed on the other vessel, which was rapidly gaining upon us.

"Really ! do you fear that we'll have a storm, Mr. Reynhove ?" asked my aunt with anxiety. "Pray, Mr. Blaek, let us turn back."

But Louis made no reply. He stood, pale with anger, staring at the yacht, which was already at our side. Some of the young people on board waved their hats triumphantly,

whilst the owner, who stood at the helm, raised a glass of wine to his lips and derisively drank our healths.

"Wait! I'll return the salute," cried Louis in a great rage; and lifting up an empty wine bottle at his side, he threw it with all his might at the other vessel. The missile did not reach its destination, however, but fell halfway in the water, whilst a loud burst of laughter rose from the yacht.

"For shame, Louis," said Harriet; "you are not behaving like a gentleman!"

"Oh, these people must not think that they have won yet," said Louis. "Don't you see that they are lowering sail? Jack, take care; we'll yet get ahead of them."

"They are lowering sail," said I, "and they are right, for they do not wish to be caught in a storm. It is unpardonable of you, Mr. Blaek, to risk the ladies getting drenched."

"Nonsense. We shall turn back directly. Jack, hurrah! We shall beat them yet. I tell you we shall beat them. There, what is he about now? He is taking in another sail. Hurrah! We are ahead of him already. He acknowledges our superiority. Laugh at him, my friends; it's our turn now."

Little as the visitors liked Louis, and alarmed as they were but a moment before, they now seemed highly pleased at his triumph, which they ascribed to his ability, while it was merely due to the prudence of the owner of the other yacht. I plainly perceived that the latter, satisfied at having given us a proof of his superiority, and with an eye to the coming tempest, took the necessary measures of precaution. I was confirmed in this supposition by Jack declaring to me that if his master did not take care and lower all sails it would soon be too late.

"And why don't you tell him so?" said I.

"Why, if I did I would surely lose my berth; you don't know my master."

"Then I shall tell him. Mr. Blaek," I began, "I do not know whether you are a meteorologist; but I ask you once more whether you do not perceive that a storm is gathering. Do you wish to place the ladies in danger?"

"Danger!" they all cried, hurrying towards us.

"Come, come, what danger?" said Louis; "we shall simply turn, and before the storm comes on you will be back at the farm. Turn the helm, Jack."

But it was too late. The man endeavoured to veer, but the vessel refused to answer the helm. At the same time a dull rumbling sound was heard on the surface of the waters, the clear colour of the sea turned to an ashy grey, dark clouds appeared overhead, and in a moment a deluge of rain came showering down, whilst the wind, veering suddenly to the north, blew into the sails with such violence that the vessel turned on one side, and would certainly have capsized if the sheets had not given way. A cry of terror arose on all hands. Louis turned deadly pale, and an imprecation died on his lips.

"Great Heavens!" cried Weinstube; "put me ashore, put me ashore. I won't stay on board any longer."

"It is nothing," said I, endeavouring to pacify the ladies; "we have had the worst already. All hands will have to work now. Retire to the cabin, ladies." Meanwhile I assisted Jack in cutting away the last remnant of rope still clinging to the mast.

The rain continued falling in torrents. The ladies, although they had taken shelter in the cabin, were even there not safe from the water, which streamed with great violence down the hatchway. Weinstube had also taken

flight below, and incessantly muttered to himself all the prayers he knew. Louis stood at the helm in despair, whilst Reynhove looked at me entreatingly, as if I could help him.

"What is to be done now?" I inquired of Jack, in whose sagacity I had more confidence than in the boastful language of his master.

"Well," said he, looking about him, "we cannot get to Muiden. The best way will be to seek some shelter on the opposite shore, and there lie at anchor until the weather clears."

To my relief, Louis agreed to this. We hoisted a foresail, and after a time we succeeded in reaching a good harbour, where we cast anchor, and were soon in comparative safety.

I now went downstairs to see how the ladies were getting on, and beheld a wretched spectacle. The table was knocked down, and the floor was strewn with broken glass and china. My aunt lay at full length on the ground, pale with sea-sickness, and her clothes saturated with water. Harriet sat by her side on a little stool, whilst Susannah was wiping the floor.

As for the German, he had ceased praying as soon as we were at anchor, and lay at full length on a couch with his face hidden in a heap of cushions.

"Where about are we?" asked Susannah.

"We are south of Durgendam, close to the dyke. Is aunt ill?"

"She is very poorly."

"What an unfortunate trip!" said Harriet; "are you not drenched, Mr. Huyck?"

"As you see, Miss Blaek. In fact, I feel ashamed to show myself to you in such a state."

"It is not the first time that Harriet saw you with a wet jacket," remarked Susannah.

Harriet smiled, but her smile was tinged with sadness.

"But, dear Ferdinand," continued my "sister," whose love of jesting never damped her affections, "you will really fall ill if you do not change those wet clothes."

"What a misfortune!" said Reynhove, who now entered the cabin.

"Mr. Blaek's excursions are really charming," remarked Susannah; "'tis a pity that they last so long."

With this she continued her scrubbing most industriously.

"What are you doing, Miss Huyck?" asked Reynhove.
"Allow me to call the man, and he'll soon set things a little straight here."

And off he went.

"He is polite, at all events," observed Susannah, with a sidelong glance at Weinstube.

"Yes, that's true, sir," said I, approaching the unmanly fellow, and tapping him on the shoulder: "would you be kind enough to rise and give your seat to the ladies?"

Weinstube just lifted his head, and looked at me vacantly.

"Come, sir," said I, "there are ladies present; surely you will be polite enough not to keep the sofa exclusively to yourself."

"Oh, dear, I am so ill," he gasped, speaking with a German accent.

"That is very possible, but so are the ladies."

Without any further ceremony I took him with one hand by the collar, and with the other round the waist, and dragged him from his seat. I then took off

my wet coat, turned up my sleeves, took my aunt in my arms and placed her on the sofa. The two girls sat down by her side, and endeavoured to render her position as comfortable as possible. As for Weinstube, he remained where I had laid him on the floor, more dead than alive. In a few moments Reynhove returned with Jack, who immediately set about putting the place somewhat in order again.

"Where is Mr. Blaek?" I asked, rather surprised that Louis did not make his appearance.

"He is sitting down in the forecastle," replied Reynhove, "smoking his pipe."

All at once we felt such a tremendous shock that Jack rushed out of the cabin—

"God help us! the anchor is gone!" he cried.

Reynhove and I hurried after him.

It was too true: our cable had parted, and we were drifting along at the mercy of wind and waves.

On deck I encountered Louis, and never shall I forget the expression of his haggard eyes and wan features.

"That confounded yacht!" he cried; "we are lost!"

And, without saying another word, he again took up his position at the helm, and stared vacantly at the surging waters.

I felt a hand on my shoulder. Turning round, I perceived Susannah and Harriet, who, speechless with terror, looked at me with an anxious gaze. I pressed both their hands in mine, and then went to Jack, who stood talking to his master, and who did not appear to pay the least attention to what was said.

"Jack," cried I, "what is to be done?"

"Hoist the foresail, and keep away from shore as much as possible!"

"Well, do it then," said I, "and meanwhile I will hold the helm."

It was too late, however ; the wind had already driven us too close to the coast. Scarcely had Jack hoisted the foresail when the vessel struck heavily aft.

"I believe we are grounded," said I.

"Four feet," said Jack, as he threw out the lead ; "and we are pretty tight fixed too."

"Mr. Blaek, shall we fire a signal-gun ?"

Louis made no reply, but put his hand in his pocket and appeared to search for something. At length he produced a bunch of keys, and, with trembling fingers, commenced to examine one after another. I saw that he would never manage to find the right one, so, snatching the whole bunch out of his hands, I told Jack to follow me, and asked him where his master kept his powder.

Jack took me to the cabin.

"The powder is in the cupboard, under that seat," he replied.

"Aunt," said I, "I am sorry I have to trouble you ; but I must get at that cupboard." And at the same time I lifted her up, cushions and all, and unlocked it.

"Oh !" cried Weinstube, "do bring me a glass of madeira and a biscuit. I am faint."

"Yes, it's just the right moment to supply you with madeira and biscuits," I said angrily, as I took the ammunition from the cupboard.

I returned on deck with Jack, and let Reynhove load the gun, as he was more used to it than I was. I then entreated the girls to return below, as they were only in the way on deck, and might be of assistance to my aunt. "I will set the example myself," said I ; "as my assistance is not required here."

We returned to the cabin. "Aunt," said I, "do not be alarmed ; there will be a gun fired directly : we have to signal that we are aground !"

"Heaven help us !" she cried, feebly lifting up her head, "must we perish here ?"

"I trust not," I replied, endeavouring to look calm ; "we are on no unknown shore, or near an uninhabited country. There are always so many fishermen about, that it would be a marvel if we were not noticed."

"Oh, dear !" sighed Weinstube, "I shall never again go on board a vessel !"

"Come, Mr. Weinstube, be a man," I said. "If it were not for the discomfort of the ladies, I should not feel very uneasy myself !"

"Do you really mean what you say, Mr. Huyck ?" whispered Harriet, with an anxious glance ; "is there really no danger ?"

I reddened, and cast my eyes to the ground as I pointed to my aunt.

"There is danger," she continued, with tearful eyes ; "and you want to disguise it, for fear of alarming us ! But just consider, as the next moment can decide our fate, if it is justifiable to pretend to be calm ?"

I felt ashamed and moved. "Miss Blaek," said I, taking her hand, "I acted for the best ; but whatever may happen, leave me at least the comfort that you are not dissatisfied with me."

She made no reply, but pressed my hand with emotion. Then, wiping her eyes, she turned away.

At this moment the signal-gun was fired.

"Ladies," said Reynhove, who entered the cabin directly afterwards, "would you prefer sitting in the forecastle — not because it is so very pleasant, but

there is a fire, and you would be much warmer than here?"

"Is there a fire?" asked my aunt, rising with an effort, "then I will certainly go there, for I am perishing of cold."

"Yes," said Weinstube, "I shall go too, for I am very cold."

"In this case, aunt," I remarked, "we must endeavour to protect you from the rain on your going to the forecastle."

As I spoke I took the tablecloths and wrapped them round the ladies. Weinstube walked in front, probably intent on procuring the best place for himself. Reynhove and Susannah supported my aunt, and I followed with Harriet. But we had scarcely arrived on deck when we were met by such a violent gust of wind that we had much trouble to keep on our feet. At the same moment we observed that the vessel went on one side.

"If I could but save you!" I whispered to Harriet, drawing her close to my side.

"We are in God's hands," said she, with an indescribably enchanting expression; "and yet," she added in a whisper, "it appears to me as if I had nothing to fear when you are with me."

At these words an unspeakable joy thrilled my bosom, even in the midst of our perilous position. However, there was no time to indulge in blissful meditations. I hastened to do all that lay in my power for our safety, and then, following the example set by the rest, clung firmly to the gangway. In speechless expectation we all stood still for a moment, staring at a tremendous wave which was coming down upon us, as though it would overwhelm us at one sweep. But the result was

unexpected. The wave lifted the yacht off the sandbank as if it had been a cork. For some moments we were blinded by the rushing foaming sea-water ; and when, once more, we opened our eyes, we perceived a dyke right before us.

"'Tis all over," cried a voice in our midst.

Susannah tore herself away from my aunt, and clung to my neck. I pressed Harriet to my bosom. A fresh wave lifted us up. Again there was a moment when we saw nothing but water. Then we felt the vessel move about as if it were borne away by some soft substance, and all at once, after a shock which threw us all down on deck, it lay still. We heard the sea surging and foaming around us, but gradually the sound died away, and when once more we rose to our feet, thinking that our last moment was at hand, no water was to be seen. The yacht had been lifted over the dyke, and lay firmly embedded in the mud on the other side.

XV.

WHO can fitly describe the various emotions which we experienced after so miraculous an escape ! During the first few moments we were struck by a sort of stupor, somewhat akin to the sensations produced upon persons who sleep in an unknown place, awake in utter bewilderment, and vainly endeavour to solve the problem of their whereabouts. In our case it was even more perplexing, for the evening had advanced, the storm was still raging around us, and everything was wrapt in gloom and darkness.

I was the first to break the silence ; and, looking about me in search of the ladies, whom I had lost sight of in the confusion of the moment, I exclaimed with rapture—

“ Heaven be praised ! we are saved.”

“ That was a narrow escape,” said Jack. “ I’ve never been blown ashore in such a strange fashion yet.”

“ Thank Heaven ! what an unexpected delivery !” exclaimed Louis.

But with this ejaculation he appeared to have exhausted his entire stock of gratitude ; for, as he walked up and down the deck, he muttered to himself—

“ A nice state of affairs ! how the deuce are we to get the yacht away from this wretched place ? ”

The three ladies were silent, and evidently wrapt in grateful meditations.

As for Reynhove, he was in ecstasy. He leaped and danced along the deck, shook hands with all of us, laughing and crying in turns, until his foot slipped on the wet boards, and he fell down at full length on his back.

"'Tis nothing," said he, scrambling up again, "all danger is past, and we are saved;" and once more he went round shaking hands with every one, and adding a few words of cordial, unaffected congratulation to each.

"Madam," said Louis, who appeared at length to feel that he owed my aunt some apology, "this is really very unfortunate. I regret that you have had such an unpleasant trip."

"It appears," said my aunt, rather vexed with Louis' behaviour, "it appears that Mr. Blaek is not accustomed to have ladies on board."

"Well, madam," continued Louis, somewhat abashed, "who could foresee such a terrific storm? Even if I had not tried to race the other yacht, we should not have escaped the tempest."

"Shiver my timbers!" said Jack, whose seaman's frankness could not bear this trumped-up excuse, "John Pergens was lying snug and warm in Muiden when the storm commenced, and we might have done the same."

"What are you jabbering there, Jack?" said Louis sternly; "don't interfere in our conversation, or you'll get your discharge this minute."

"My discharge," repeated Jack, walking away. "Hem! there won't be much to earn on the yacht for a week or so, at any rate."

"Well, Mr. Blaek," said my aunt, "what is done cannot be undone, so we had better not give vent to reproaches."

"The more so," remarked Harriet, "as Louis is sufficiently punished already; he will not get his yacht on the other side of the dyke as easily as it was carried here."

"No," said Reynhove, "unless an earthquake comes to hoist it back again."

"Well!" grumbled Louis, "you may jest if you like. But how I am to get it away from this place, the deuce knows."

"I think," I remarked, "we would do better to see how we can get away ourselves. Whereabout are we?"

"A good way east of Muiden, I believe," said Louis. "We could not have struck on a more unlucky spot; we are half an hour from the nearest inhabited place, and it is getting so very dark that we cannot see which is the right road."

"We cannot stay here," I replied; "and I believe a walk would do the ladies some good and remedy the effects of cold and moisture."

"I will accompany the ladies with pleasure," said Reynhove; "but allow me to observe that it is dry in the cabin, and that if the ladies walk out they will be drenched through."

"Well," said Harriet, "I should prefer going away; but if Mrs. Van Bempden disapproves of it . . ."

"Anything rather than stop on this horrible yacht," replied my aunt. "Come! let us go at once."

"Are you coming too?" I asked Louis.

"I have always heard," said he, "that the captain should be the last to remain on board; but if you land

“anywhere, for Heaven’s sake send some people to come and take care of the yacht.”

“I would gladly assist you,” said I, “but I cannot leave the ladies.”

“Yes, you are all going away!” remarked Louis. “Who is to go and fetch the men?”

“Well, send Weinstube to reconnoitre,” answered Reynhove. “By the by, where the deuce is he?”

“Where is Weinstube?” we all exclaimed.

“Heaven forbid! I hope that he has not fallen overboard,” said my aunt.

Weinstube was sought for everywhere, but in vain; he was not to be found. Some of us thought that he had been standing on the forecastle just before we were lifted over the dyke; and we could not help thinking that he had been thrown overboard, and had found his death in the waves. Coarse and troublesome as the man was, we still felt shocked at the idea of having lost a fellow-traveller by such an unfortunate occurrence. There was no help for it, however, and this incident only still further tended to induce the ladies to leave the scene of so much misfortune. Wishing to discover a suitable place for them to land, I slipped overboard, and began searching for a dry and convenient spot. But scarcely had I taken a few steps when I heard a faint voice close to me, groaning piteously.

“Who is there?” I cried, unable to distinguish any object in the darkness. “Jack! just bring a light. There is some one here moaning terribly.”

“The deuce there is!” cried Jack, who was not quite free from superstition. “I hope it isn’t the ghost of that poor German.”

“Never mind,” said I, “we must find out what it is.”

Jack summoned up courage, and got out of the yacht with a lantern in his hand. We now heard the groans still plainer, and a faint voice murmured—

“Oh, good Heavens, help me! I am dead!”

“It is Weinstube himself, and not his ghost,” said I, approaching the spot whence the sound came. And we soon discovered the hapless German, who was up to his neck in a ditch full of mud, quite near the vessel, and who would certainly have been suffocated had not speedy assistance arrived. How he got there was a mystery to us; but as it was not to be expected that he would give an explanation in his present condition, we handed him an oar, and thus pulled him out of the ditch. He emerged in a very sad plight, and, when once more on land, stood trembling and shivering, incapable of uttering a word. We advised him to accompany us, if he felt strong enough, and walk himself warm, as there were no means aboard to provide him with a change of clothes.

The ladder was now placed alongside the vessel, and the ladies got on shore. We left Louis by himself, without heeding his complaints, and commenced our expedition, headed by Jack, who had a lantern in one hand and an oar in the other, for the purpose of feeling his way over the ground. Then followed Harriet and Susannah, then myself with my aunt, then Reynhove carrying another lantern, while Weinstube brought up the rear.

It was neither an easy nor a pleasant task to plod along through the mud in this fashion, although the wind had considerably abated in violence, and we were somewhat shielded by the dyke; but it was pitch dark, and the ground and our clothes were getting saturated by a cold drizzling rain.

We had trudged on for about a quarter of an hour when I observed that my aunt was getting utterly exhausted, and became less and less capable of continuing her walk. I felt her lean more and more heavily on my arm, for she was worn out with fatigue and agitation, and walked on mechanically. At length she stood quite still, and complained that she had lost a shoe.

"Stop!" I cried, "aunt has lost her shoe. Really the road is too bad. Is there no house in the neighbourhood?"

"Have only a little patience," said Jack. "I see a light lower down the road."

"Is it very far?" asked my aunt. "I really cannot walk any farther, and I will rather await your return here by the side of the dyke."

"No, I will never permit that," said I; "but if Mr. Reynhove will hand me his walking-stick, I think I shall be able to assist you."

Reynhove was ready at once, and gave his lantern to Weinstube. We took hold of the cane, and asked my aunt to sit down on it, and to put her arms round our necks. By means of this improvised but not very comfortable litter, we carried her along, not without frequent stumbling and halting on the road. It was a miracle to me that we did not break down with our burden on the narrow path, where we were continually slipping and sliding about, and sinking to our ankles in the mud. I confess that I was highly pleased when at length we approached a rustic gate leading to a farmhouse, and heard the barking of dogs.

We all halted, and Jack began to cry with all his might—

"Halloo! halloo! open the door!"

We received no other answer than a terrific hoýling and barking. Then all of us began to shout as loudly as we could, whilst the dogs barked still more fiercely, as though in emulation of the noise we made, and an uproar ensued that might have been heard a mile off.

At length a door was opened, and we saw a light glimmer in the distance. We were all silent, inspired by a supreme feeling of hopefulness and expectation.

"What do you want?" asked a voice.

"Shelter," cried one.

"Can we come in?" asked another.

"I say, my lad," shouted a third.

"We are friends!" all cried out together.

The individual who stood at the door made no movement, and appeared to be unable to make up his mind.

"My friend," cried I, "you can earn a good deal of money if you will assist us."

These words made an evident impression; the man came forward, and although we again lost sight of him in the dark, we guessed from the creaking of his boots that he was approaching. But when he was about half-way to the gate, we observed, to our dismay, that he suddenly turned round with a cry of terror, and rushed back into the house, slamming the door behind him.

"The deuce take him," said Jack; "we must get in, anyhow."

"Cannot the gate be forced open?" asked Reynhove.

We examined the gate, but it was too solid a structure. On closer inspection, however, it appeared that there was a chance of climbing it, and I proposed to do so with Jack.

"For Heaven's sake, don't, Ferdinand!" said my aunt; "the dogs may attack you."

"No fear, aunt. If we were in Friesland, where the dogs always run all over the farm, I should not care to try it, but here they are generally chained to their kennel."

Without delay I clambered over the gate, followed by Jack, and we were soon on the other side. Once there, we made for the house ; but scarcely had we gone a few steps when it appeared that this violation of domicile had been perceived from within, for a window was pushed open and a head appeared.

"If you don't go away at once," cried a voice, "I will fire."

"But listen for a moment, will you?" I shouted. "We are no thieves ; we are . . ."

I was very unpleasantly interrupted by the firing of a gun. Fortunately the shot did not touch any of us, but nevertheless it greatly alarmed the ladies, who commenced to shriek with terror. However, I determined to make another attempt, and hidden behind a tree, where I hoped to be out of range, I once more shouted—

"Mind what you are about, my man. It is Mrs. Van Bempden, of Heizicht, who is outside the gate, and I am Huyck of Amsterdam."

"What do you say?" replied a voice from the window. "Mrs. Van Bempden! Do you mean that?"

"Don't you know me, Roggefeld?" I cried, for I now recognised the voice, which at first appeared familiar to me. "I am really Huyck ; Mrs. Van Bempden is outside."

"Well, did you ever!" the farmer cried. "Excuse my rudeness ; I'll be with you in a minute."

Meanwhile I shouted to the others that help was coming. After a few moments the door was again opened, and "Roggefled made his appearance, while his wife and a couple of servants stood gaping at the door.

"Well, did you ever!" repeated Roggefled, approaching us. "I have not hurt ye, eh? It was only loose powder; but I made sure there were thieves."

"Your servant might have learned otherwise," said I, "if he had not run away."

"Yes; Tom thought you were ghosts; you do look rather funny."

I could not blame the man; for from the distance where they stood outside the gates, the ladies, wrapt in white tablecloths, presented a tolerably comical picture, which, heightened by the faint light of the lantern, produced a somewhat weird effect and justified Tom's terror.

The gate was now unlocked; we entered the house and briefly related our adventures to Roggefled.

"Now, I ask you," said his wife, as she kindled a good fire, "what those rich folks go to sea for, when they can sit snug and warm at home?"

Meanwhile we laid our heads together to devise what was next to be done. I proposed that if Roggefled could provide the necessary accommodation, the ladies should retire to bed at once, while the gentlemen should pass the night by the fire.

This was agreed upon, and we were soon sitting down by the fireside, while Reynhove prepared some very palatable hot grog.

"Now you have not yet told us, Weinstube," said Reynhove, "how you managed to fall into that ditch."

"What can I say?" said Weinstube. "I was

standing on the forecastle when we went over the dyke, so I thought we were going to the deuce. I was knocked down, and I held fast to a rope ; but it began to swing and twist about. I fell overboard, and I really thought I was drowned. But no, there was the grass. I got up and said to myself that confounded ship will fall upon me, so I ran off, until I sank up to my ears in mud, and there I lay sprawling and shouting, but no one heard me."

"I confess," observed Reynhove, "that your position was far from enjoyable ; but now take my advice, Wein-stube, and tell no one of your adventure. It is really a little too humiliating to come to grief in a filthy ditch, when one has had such a fine chance of drowning in the open sea."

After we had an hour's rest it was arranged that I should drive to Heizicht, where I naturally supposed that all would be in great alarm at the absence of my aunt and the young ladies, whilst Reynhove agreed to go to Amsterdam and reassure my family.

Roggesfeld's cart was soon ready, and we rumbled away to Muiden, where we awoke half the village. I sent some men to Louis to guard the wrecked vessel, and despatched a man on horseback to old Martha's farm.

I took a carriage and rode to Heizicht, where I told the servants our misadventure, and then communicated it also in a brief note to Mr. Blaek. After I had retired to rest the incidents of the evening kept my mind occupied, and at first the picture of the raging sea and the tossing vessel, brightened with the cherished image of Harriet Blaek, was continually before me, but at last fatigue triumphed over the fancies of my imagination, and I fell into a deep slumber, from which I did not

awake until the servant roused me. I rose, dressed myself with all possible speed, and found my aunt's maid ready to accompany me with half-a-dozen boxes. We immediately entered the carriage and drove back to Roggefельd's farm, whence the ladies, after a hasty toilet, returned with us. They were as well as circumstances would permit, only my aunt complained of a headache, and as soon as she arrived at Heizicht she retired to rest, while the young ladies and myself enjoyed a hearty breakfast.

XVI.

AFTER our meal Susannah, Harriet, and myself remained for a little while talking about our late adventure until my aunt's maid entered the room with a message to my sister, which necessitated her leaving us for a few moments.

I was now left alone with Harriet, and I thought it a good opportunity to speak to her.

As it frequently happens in affairs of love, we remained for some considerable time in silence. I was determined to give expression to my feelings, but was at a loss how to commence the attack. As for Harriet, she was evidently imbued with that delicate perceptive faculty with which all women are gifted, and divined my thoughts, no doubt, as she worked on in silence, with her eyes bent on her embroidery, although her changing colour and heaving bosom betrayed her inward agitation.

I wanted to disclose to her my heart's secret, but did not know how ; for I could not very well begin abruptly, "I love you !"

At length, when the silence had for some time remained unbroken, and fearing lest Susannah should return soon, I resumed the conversation from the point where we had left off.

" We were just now speaking about accidents by land and sea. It is a solacing thought to me that I neither keep a carriage nor a yacht, and therefore am not so

much in danger of meeting with such misadventures."

My insignificant remark elicited no reply, but I saw the red blood mantling on her cheeks.

"Neither do I think that I shall ever possess a yacht or a carriage," I continued.

She still made no answer.

"I believe one can be just as happy without either."

The same silence, but I saw her little fingers beginning to tremble.

"And you, Miss Blaek, do you also think . . . I mean, could you be happy . . . without a carriage . . . without all those luxuries to which you are now . . . so accustomed at your uncle's house ?"

This was a direct question, and required an answer.

"I do not know ; that depends."

"Pardon me," said I, "perhaps my question was impolite. But," I continued, rising and taking up a position at her side, "I only ask this because, if you were so much attached to those comforts which wealth alone can furnish, I would hesitate to say that which . . ." Here I felt myself for a few moments utterly at a loss to proceed. Her eyes were still bent on her work, and her colour came and went by turns.

"Yesterday," I resumed, "when we were in mortal peril, you addressed some words to me which I shall never forget—words which even at this moment resound in my ears like heavenly music. I should not venture to draw any conclusion from what perhaps arose from a momentary emotion and from the agitated state in which you were then placed. But now, in a calmer moment, will you permit me to put a favourable construction on those words ?"

Harriet lifted up her eyes and looked at me with an enchanting glance, then, casting them down again, she replied—

“I venture to say that I was quite calm at the time, and that I showed no traces of agitation; therefore what I have said then . . .”

“You will say now?” I asked warmly, taking her hand.

She rested her head on my arm, soon raised it again, and remarked with a mournful, deprecating look—

“Come, I am very foolish. Pardon me, Mr. Huyck, we better not touch upon this subject again . . . and I even think that we should do well to break off our acquaintance.”

“What!” I exclaimed, surprised and disappointed; “you inspire me with the sweetest hopes, and in one breath you crush them.”

“I feel that I have done wrong,” she replied; “but I believe you will be generous enough not to take advantage of a moment of weakness. Your words took me by surprise, . . . and I should not have answered them so thoughtlessly. You see,” she continued, “I have not known you long enough to feel certain that the feeling of . . . preference which I cherish towards you is quite justifiable.”

“If that be the case, I shall live in hopes for the future,” I said.

“You are right, sir,” she resumed, with an expression of sadness on her features, which told me that she had not given me the true reason of her reserve; “and yet . . .”

“Well, what else can there be? I entreat you to tell me.”

"I am dependent on my uncle," she said, with downcast eyes, "and I doubt whether he . . ."

"What!" I remarked, "could he have any objection to me or to my family? Or could my want of fortune be an obstacle in my way? It is true that I am not rich; but I am at present partner in a flourishing firm, and I hope soon to be able to support a wife, if not luxuriously, at least with comfort."

"My uncle will never sanction my engagement," she replied; "and even when I shall be of age, and my own mistress, I would not do anything to displease him. I owe him everything, and I must honour him even more than a father, for he has protected and cherished me more than his own child."

"Only grant me your permission," said I, "and my father will speak with Mr. Blaek; that is all I desire."

"Listen," said she; "I will be frank with you and tell you all. My uncle has firmly resolved that Louis shall marry me. As yet father and son are not agreed, otherwise I should really not know what to do. As long, therefore, as Louis remains unmarried, my uncle will not resign his hopes, and so it is useless to ask him for my hand."

"And so I must wait until it pleases Mr. Louis Blaek to make up his mind? I should imagine that your uncle, seeing that neither of you shows much inclination to meet his wishes, will not be foolish enough to retain his ideas."

"I fear that you will not succeed," said Harriet; "but you may try if you like," she added, with a charming smile.

"Oh, thank you for this permission," said I, putting her hand to my lips, with rapture; "whatever may happen, we shall one day be united."

At this moment the door opened. We moved away from each other, and to our dismay we saw Mr. Blaek and his son enter the room. The old gentleman did not appear to observe our confusion, at least he showed no signs of it, but he immediately approached his niece, embraced her affectionately, and inquired after her health.

"Uncle," she answered, "I am as well as if nothing had happened."

"I don't know, cousin," said Louis, who had meanwhile looked at us with a penetrating glance, "but really I do think that you look a little out of spirits. Let me see," he continued, taking her hand; "you are actually trembling."

"In any case," I remarked, "it would be no marvel if Miss Blaek still suffered from the consequences of our fatal evening's amusement."

"Hello, Huyck," said Louis, as if he only just saw me, "how are you? Yes, it was an unfortunate affair. But who the deuce could help it? I am the greatest sufferer. And how did that muff Weinstube get on?"

"Your servant, sir," said old Mr. Blaek, with a bow; "we came to inquire about the health of the ladies. At the same time I must thank you for your attention in giving me such speedy information."

In the midst of our conversation Susannah returned, and my aunt, who had now somewhat recovered from the effects of the adventure of the previous evening, soon followed her. Shortly afterwards a carriage drew up in front of the villa, from which my parents alighted, who had been informed by Reynhove of what had happened. The chief topic of the conversation was,

of course, the incidents of the previous night, but my love scene with Harriet still haunted my mind and prevented me from paying proper attention to it.

I had intended to leave for Amsterdam early the following morning, together with my sister; but as there was plenty of room in my parents' carriage, it was agreed that Susannah and I should return with them immediately after dinner. I was somewhat disappointed at this unexpected change in my programme, for I had anticipated a pleasant evening in Harriet's company. On leaving, a regretful glance which I cast on her, and a tender pressure of the hand, to some extent expressed the grief which this parting occasioned me, and I thought I observed a tear glistening in her eye.

On the road homeward I was very quiet and taciturn, so much so that Susannah laughed at me; but I had two sound excuses at hand—namely, sleep and fatigue—and so I obtained permission to settle down in my corner and indulge in a nap, from which I did not awake until I heard the carriage rattling over the stones of Ansterdam.

The following day, being seated in the usual place in our office, I was unable to do my work, as the image of Harriet Blaek appeared constantly before me. In spite of all the trouble which I took to concentrate my attention on my work, the letters, the books, and the papers on my desk appeared continually to shift from their places, as if they were struck by a magic wand, and everywhere my eyes fell upon the name of my lady-love. ~

The same evening, after dinner, I told my parents that I loved Harriet Blaek. I expected that my father would have made some objections to the match, and I was right. He dwelt strongly on my indiscretion in arriving

at such rash conclusions with regard to a girl with whom my acquaintance was as yet of such a short duration, as well as on my unsettled position in life. Ultimately, however, after telling him of the conversation which I had had with Miss Blaek, he promised that he would go next morning and see her uncle.

"Well, I only hope, papa," said Susannah, who was present, "that you will not forget to enumerate all Ferdinand's good qualities, in order to convince Mr. Blaek that he could not give his niece to a man more worthy of her."

"You had better make a list of them," replied my father, "otherwise I might forget some."

"In the first place," continued my sister, "you ought to praise the extraordinary sagacity which Ferdinand has shown in discovering all the excellent qualities with which Harriet Blaek is endowed, in the four or five days which he has spent in her company."

"You'd better leave that chord untouched," said my mother. "I fear Mr. Blaek will himself observe that this love has budded rather prematurely."

"Secondly," resumed Susannah, "you should eulogise Ferdinand's self-confidence, which, although he possesses nothing, has inspired him with sufficient assurance to ask for the hand of a girl who has no more worldly goods than he has himself, in the firm conviction that he will soon make his fortune."

"Come," said my mother, "you are exaggerating again. Although Ferdinand does not possess much at present, he is not entirely without prospects; and I flatter myself that my sisters-in-law will do their best to enable him to begin housekeeping."

"Of course," said Susannah, "what would one not

do for such a nice little nephew? Well, I'll just see if they will open their cashboxes for him; for if so, they will do the same for me, and then I shall know, in case I am one day asked in marriage, on what I may reckon. But I must not wander from my subject. Then, papa, you must dwell upon Ferdinand's eloquence, by which, in the twinkling of an eye, he has won the heart of an innocent maiden, so that he may say, with Cæsar, 'I came, saw, and conquered.'

"I don't know," said my father, "that it speaks much for the common sense of the lady to say so quickly 'yes' to that young fellow's question."

"Well, papa, remarked Susannah, "you must not judge Harriet too severely. She has not a very great dowry; and as that lout of a cousin will not have her, she does no great harm in jumping at a chance. Alas! I know from experience that the nicest, prettiest, wittiest girls, with no money, sit waiting in vain for somebody to turn up, and ask continually, like the late and lamented Mrs. Bluebeard, 'Sister Anna, sister Anna, do you see nothing coming?'"

"Indeed, Susan," said I, "I did not know that you were in such a hurry to get married."

"Ah! you were in hopes that I should die an old maid, and you were already thinking of your children's inheritance. No, my dear boy, you can remove that idea from your mind. It would not take the little ones very long to count Aunt Susan's money."

The arrival of my younger brothers and sisters, who had just returned from their drawing-class, interrupted the conversation, and the subject was abandoned for the evening.

It may be imagined that I had little peace of mind

on the following day. It was with mingled feelings of gratitude and pain that I left the office in the evening and returned home. I found my mother and sister in anxious expectation of my father's return from his interview with Mr. Blaek.

More than half an hour passed before we heard the well-known knock. My heart throbbed violently on his entering the room; but when I looked at him, his features were so stern in their expression, that the question, "Well, how did it end?" died on my lips.

My father took his seat in silence.

"I see," said I, "that the offer has not been favourably received."

"This is the whole sum and substance of Mr. Blaek's reply. He received me very kindly, and declared that a connection with our family would give him great pleasure. But he thought that there still rested a heavier responsibility on him, because Harriet was his niece than if she were his daughter. As long as she was a minor he could not, as her guardian, sanction a marriage with a gentleman without means; she was still too young and inexperienced to judge for herself; he did not know you sufficiently—and he would therefore beg of you to desist from any further endeavours to see or speak with his niece until she should be of age."

"What! may I not even keep up her acquaintance? That is a little too hard and unreasonable."

"Do not condemn Mr. Blaek," said my father; "I cannot blame him; he is responsible for the happiness of his niece, and he must watch over her welfare. You have already seen her privately, you have declared your love and received her answer; and now that he knows the state of affairs he may not permit a renewal of such attempts."

"I suppose he means to keep her for his dear Louis," observed Susannah; "but if she accepts him, I will never see her again."

"Come," said my father, "perhaps it is better as it is; you will now have an opportunity to test your feelings, and discover whether it is really a sincere and permanent love which inspires you. I confess that it is a disappointment for you; but it is useful and salutary for weak mortals to suffer such trials, and learn to bear them with courage and fortitude."

I was silent. I acknowledged the truth and sound sense of my father's words, but still, at the moment, they were far from soothing to my feelings. I sat down disconcerted; none of us were in very high spirits, and the evening would have passed gloomily enough had not an unexpected visit given a new channel to our thoughts. The visitor was none else than Reynhove, who, with his usual politeness, came to inquire after the health of my sister, as he feared that her recent accident on the water might have produced unpleasant consequences.

His sprightly cheerful deportment soon exerted a refreshing influence on our melancholy mood, and animated the flow of conversation. I noticed, however, with some surprise, that my sister was unusually demure and reserved during Reynhove's visit.

After his departure I asked her what she thought of our new acquaintance.

"Oh! I like him very well," she replied; "you know how fond I am of butterflies, goldfinches, humming-birds, and peacocks, and of all that is bright and graceful."

"That is no direct reply to my question," said I. "According to father's opinion, Mr. Reynhove should

not be classed with those dandies whose only merit lies in their handsome coat."

"Certainly not," she resumed ; "for, besides that, he wears an exceedingly neat wig and spotless linen, and a splendid diamond adorns his scarf."

"Susan, Susan," said I, "speak the truth, for I am very much mistaken if Mr. Reynhove is not smitten by you ; so, if you know anything against him, you had better say so at once."

"Susan is quite right," said my mother ; "a young girl should never gossip about gentlemen ; she might regret it afterwards."

We gradually reverted to that sombre mood from which Reynhove's visit had temporarily roused us. Even my sister, at other times so bright and good-tempered, made no attempt to enliven the conversation, and sat wrapt in thought. At length, my mother asked Aunt Lina whether she had seen anything more of the young lady who lived in Heynz's house.

"Yes," answered my aunt. "Did not Ferdinand tell you that he met her at my house ?"

All looked at me, and my father very searchingly. I felt that I had done wrong in not mentioning this accidental meeting, as now it only appeared as if I had kept silent on purpose.

"I had quite forgotten it," said I. "Besides, I did not think that any one would take an interest in such a trifling occurrence."

"But," continued my aunt, "that young lady takes a great interest in you ; she has visited me twice since you saw her, and each time she has inquired after you. A dear girl she is ; but what a pity that she is a Roman Catholic ! I had a visit from her father to-day, who thanked

me for the kindness which I had shown to his daughter. A polite man, that Mr. Van Beveren."

"Van Beveren," repeated my father, who had listened very attentively. "Where does the gentleman come from?"

"From Deventer," replied my aunt.

"From Deventer, indeed!" said my father; "and did that Mr. Van Beveren ask you to lend him any money?"

"No, brother. And he did not look like one in want of money. He was well dressed, and altogether had the appearance of a fashionable man."

"I need not tell you, sister," remarked my father, "that the devil himself sometimes goes disguised as an angel of light in order to attain his object. I should advise you to be a little careful."

"Why, brother, do you know anything against these people?" aunt asked, with some uneasiness.

"I know nothing against them, but there seems something strange about them."

"You don't imagine," said my mother, "that Heynz would harbour suspected persons?"

"That would be rather comical, certainly. But, sister, did the young lady inquire so affectionately about Ferdinand?"

"O father," said I, wishing to remove all suspicion, "I believe aunt is exaggerating a little. She and myself are, perhaps, Amelia's only acquaintances, and she has no one else to talk about."

"Ah! is her name Amelia?" asked my father. "You appear to be pretty familiar with her to call her by her Christian name."

I saw Susannah turning pale, and I felt that I blushed

myself. My sister, wishing to help me out of my confusion, remarked, with an affected laugh—

“I suppose she is a princess, travelling incognito ; and princesses are always called by their Christian names.”

“At any rate,” said I, taking courage, “I know her Christian name better than her surname ; for the rest, our acquaintance is very slight, and I have no desire to renew it, amiable as she may be.”

My father looked at me, shook his head, took a pinch of snuff, and retired to his study ; so that, to my great satisfaction, the conversation about Amelia and her parent dropped for the moment.

XVII.

THE following Saturday, feeling very sad at heart, with my mind still occupied with the all-engrossing idea about Harriet Blaek, which had received so heavy a blow, I resolved to go out for an hour or two, and endeavour to turn my thoughts into another channel. I left home therefore in the afternoon, and walked towards the Haarlem gate, where I knew a race was being held that day.

On arriving on the ground, I found that the sports were already over, and was told that my friend Reynhove was the owner of the winning horse. I walked on, and came upon the yard of a roadside inn ; and whilst thinking whether I should enter and take some refreshment, I was suddenly seized from behind, and dragged inside by a strong pair of arms. I turned round and beheld Reynhove himself, who, it appeared, had seen me from inside the inn, and led me to a large summer-house standing in a neat little garden. There was assembled a jovial company, comprising some high military functionaries from The Hague, Louis Blaek, Weinstube, and the bard, Lucas Helling, whose venerable appearance and threadbare clothes seemed strangely out of place among these youthful patricians. I was introduced to those of the guests who were unknown to me by Reynhove, who was evidently the hero

of the feast, and my health was drunk in a brimming cup of Burgundy.

The conversation was not at all confined to the topic of the day—the race; it soon assumed that flippant, ribald character so conspicuous in festive assemblies, especially when the youthful guests have worshipped with rather too much devotion at the shrine of Bacchus. Louis Blaek took occasion to refer to his amiable cousin, and this he did in so rude and ungentlemanly a fashion that my blood boiled with indignation; so I hastily rose from my seat, and told him that it was very wrong to speak of Miss Blaek in such a manner, and that I would not allow her to be insulted in my presence.

"I did not insult her," replied Louis; "but because you have been alone with her once or twice, and she has perhaps played the prude, you think she is like that with every one? Go along, I know all about it."

"I am uncertain," said I, "whether to term your language slander or child's prattle."

"What!" cried Louis, starting from his chair. "Do you know what you are saying?"

"Not only do I know it, but I am ready to repeat it, and I will not hear another word in disparagement of your cousin."

"Who the deuce asked you to be her champion? But never mind; we shall see each other again, Mr. Huyck."

"Don't be foolish, Blaek," interposed Reynhove; "our friend Huyck is quite right. You have spoken in an unpardonable manner about your cousin, and you would act much better by not mentioning her name again, and by settling the quarrel in drinking a glass of wine together."

"Mr. Reynhove is perfectly right," said another of the guests; "you cannot fight with one who takes up the cudgels in behalf of your own cousin."

"Yes, that's true," remarked Weinstube; "let us talk no more about it, and drink a glass together."

"With pleasure," said Louis; "if Huyck will only ask pardon for the improper language which he has used towards me."

"I believe," I replied, "that I have been moderate enough in my expressions, and I cannot ask pardon for them. But I had no intention to insult you, and simply wished to defend the honour of your cousin."

"Let this reparation satisfy you, Blaek," said Reynhove. "Come, do not be childish, and don't commence a dispute which would only render you ridiculous. A young girl's honour is a delicate subject, and should not be spoken of lightly."

"Indeed," said Helding, as Louis accepted the glass which Reynhove pressed on him, "the honour of a young girl is indeed a delicate subject. Oh! Clara! Clara! if you were lightly spoken of, no one would take your part." Whilst saying these words the tears gushed from his eyes.

"What's that?" asked Weinstube; "what are you crying and lamenting about? Drink a drop and don't stand blubbering there."

"Oh! my dear sir," said Helding, sobbing, "I never hear people talk about a pretty girl but I think of my poor daughter. Once she was also good and virtuous, and now . . . oh! oh! Mr. Louis will recollect what a good, amiable creature she was, until some scoundrel . . . oh! oh!"

"What do I know about your daughter?" said Louis, turning pale. "But . . . yes, I recollect . . . she left you, did she not?"

"Yes, sir," answered Helding, evidently offended at Louis's words, "she left me; and I can say it without a blush; for I always loved her and taught her her duty, and her shame clings to the scoundrel who led her astray. I am but a worn-out old man; but if ever I discover the seducer who has robbed me of my treasure and of my only happiness, I shall strike him down. Pardon me, gentlemen, you are all young and thoughtless; but if you had any idea how your careless behaviour may for ever blight a man's happiness, you would not jest upon such a subject."

Whilst Helding spoke, there was something manly and dignified in his demeanour; the feeling of self-respect, which at other times slumbered within his bosom, was kindled into a sudden flash at the mention of his daughter's name; the wine seemed to inspire him with renewed vigour, and to my eyes the bashful, insipid, cringeing parasite had become another being. It was, however, nothing but a mere flash in the pan, extinguished as quickly as it had been kindled, and by which Louis and his friends were not very edified, for they all paid a visit to the stables. I availed myself of this opportunity to remind the poet that it was high time to go home; and, after a short resistance, he agreed, and we both left the inn.

I had scarcely gone twenty paces when Helding, who but a moment before had spoken so feelingly, suddenly grasped my arm, and stuttered forth—

"It is really a pity to go now, when there is still such a deal of good wine left."

I looked at him. His distended eyes and staggering walk convinced me that he was intoxicated, and I supposed that the sudden exit into the cold air had made him worse.

"Take care, Helling," said I; "let us walk on without inducing people to stare after us."

Meanwhile I did my best to pull the poor old sot along. Every moment he staggered against me as if he were skating. Fortunately it was getting dark, and there were but few people seated before the taverns; but still I felt ashamed to walk about the streets with a drunken man. Luckily I met Reynhove, who soon perceived what was the matter with Helling, and took hold of his left arm while I held the other. Thus we managed to get him as far as the town-gate, where we took a coach, packed our unconscious burden into it, and walked on at the side.

"I assure you," began Reynhove, "that when I formed Louis Blaek's acquaintance some weeks since, I thought he was a good, frank sort of fellow; but I have been greatly disappointed in him. What a disgraceful way to talk about his cousin! By the by, excuse my asking you such a question, but how do you like Miss Harriet Blaek?"

"This is not a time to speak about her," I replied, not feeling much inclined to make Reynhove my confidant.

"It is an excellent time for conversation," he resumed; "and you need have no fear for me; we shall not be rivals. But what may be the reason that her uncle is so very anxious for a marriage between her and Louis? and why should he speak about it in such a strange and unaccountable manner?"

"Has he done so in your presence?" I asked, with some surprise.

"In my presence—better still, to myself, my dear fellow."

"How was that?"

"Listen: You are aware that I am staying with the Blaeks at present. Well, last night I was lying snug and comfortable in bed, when all at once my bedroom door was opened. 'Who is there?' I asked; but no answer came. I sat up in bed, and saw approach me a tall, bare-footed figure, in a night-cap and dressing-gown, with a lighted candle in his hand. It was old Mr. Blaek."

"Indeed! And what could he have to say to you?"

"Imagine my curiosity. 'My dear Mr. Blaek, what has happened?' I inquired. But he made no reply, placed the candlestick on the table, took a chair, and sat down by my bedside. Then I perceived that he was a somnambulist."

"And did he speak to you?"

"He took my hand in his, and, looking at me with a face full of sorrow, said—

"'For Heaven's sake, Louis, do not ruin your old father. Take pity on me. Restore to me my peace of mind and marry Harriet. Only to-day I refused an offer for her.'"

"Did he say that?"

"Those were his own words.

"'Oh, if you knew,' he continued, 'what it means to suffer the pangs of remorse for so many years, and to possess but one sole means of reparation! It is in your power, my son, to give me rest in my old age. I have always allowed you to do your own will; I have, perhaps, loved you too much: for Heaven's sake then, Louis, do for me that which you alone can do.'"

"This is very mysterious! And what can be the secret which so grievously oppresses him?"

"I do not know; and I would rather have left the room than listen to anything which might have prejudiced in my eyes a man whose hospitality I was enjoying. The old man continued—

"' You do not know why I desire this marriage. And you will never know it until the hour of my death. And it will not be very far off, if you continue thus to thwart my designs.'"

"Fearful! But what may be the cause of all this?"

"I began to feel embarrassed. I disengaged my hand, and moved so close to the wall that I lay beyond his reach. He groped about for me a little longer, then with a deep sigh he rose, took up the candlestick, and went away as silently as he had come."

"I should not repeat this story if I were you," said I. "What you have heard was not intended for your ear, and it is more or less a breach of confidence to relate it to another."

"You say this now," said Reynhove, laughing; "but you are right. I would not have told it to you if I had not thought that it might interest you. As for Louis, I did consider it my duty to tell him of his father's visit to my bedroom. He laughed heartily at it, and remarked that he had had so many similar visits that now he locks his bedroom door at night. I think I shall follow his example for the few more days which I shall spend with the Blaecks. I do not care for a repetition of the old man's visit, for I might perhaps hear more than would be pleasant."

"Do you intend to return to The Hague soon?"

"Yes; I do not wish to become very intimate with the Blaecks. Besides, your father gave me some good

advice the last time I visited him; I therefore shall endeavour to enter some career, as I have had enough of an idle, indolent sort of life. But before my departure I will pay your family another visit."

We continued our conversation until we arrived at Heynz's house. Wishing to avoid another meeting with Amelia, I had intended to leave the intoxicated old man in charge of the portrait-painter. But as ill luck would have it, the latter was not at home. Helding lay like a log of wood in the coach, and of course the servant-girl could not manage to drag him up three flights of stairs. We were thus compelled to perform this task ourselves, and were just lifting the poet out when Louis came running up, followed by his servant.

"Hallo!" said he, "I have found you at last. Come, let me have a hand in the game too."

As he spoke he caught hold of one of Helding's legs; but I soon perceived that his assistance was but of little avail, for he staggered as he went, and appeared to be very flushed and excited. As soon as we had carried our burden up the first two staircases, Blaek loosened his hold and sat down on the landing. Meanwhile we pulled Helding a few steps higher; but, in passing, I saw that the door of Amelia's room was opened; and her father, no doubt feeling uneasy at the unwonted noise below, appeared on the threshold. Louis also observed him, and, abruptly rising from his seat on the stairs, entered the room.

"Come!" I remarked to Reynhove, "let us make haste, or there will be another quarrel!"

Without further delay we dragged Helding into his room, laid him in bed, and rushed downstairs. Amelia was seated at her work-table, pale with fear, and with her

hands clasped convulsively. Her father stood in the centre of the room, with folded arms, glaring at Louis, who could scarcely stand on his legs.

"Ah! now I see it all, miss," cried the latter. "You won't have me for your sweetheart; but still you receive visits from gentlemen. To Huyck the door is not closed; and who is this other fine fellow—the paymaster-general, I suppose?"

"Blaek," cried Reynhove and I, as we took hold of his hands; "do not make a fool of yourself! Come along with us."

"Pardon me," said Bos, "but is this the Mr. Blaek who has had the impertinence of making such disgraceful offers to my daughter?"

"Your daughter!" repeated Louis, taken aback for the moment, "well, yes; what has that to do with it?" he continued, with his usual abruptness. "I want to make her rich; and if you are a man of sense you will have no objection to that. Is there any harm in falling in love with a pretty girl? She accepts presents, too, innocent as she looks!"

"Wait a moment," said Bos, and, opening a drawer, he produced a necklace, and thrust it into Louis's pocket; then, without another word, he dealt him a violent blow in the face.

"Sir," said Reynhove, abashed, "we shall take care that he does not give you any further trouble, but if you strike him we will not hold him back!"

"Sir," answered Bos very coolly, "he has but received a hundredth part of his deserts; it is high time that he should learn in what way he will be welcomed here in future!"

"You shall give me satisfaction," roared Louis, at-

tempting to shake us off. “Don’t hold me, wretched, false friends that you are. Peter! my whip! I shall teach the scoundrel manners!”

At these words Peter, his servant, rushed into the room and approached Bos, whip in hand, whilst Louis freed himself from our grasp and sprang upon Bos with the fury of a madman. The latter awaited his attack very coolly, grasped him by the neck and by the waist, and, in spite of all his struggling, carried him out of the room, and threw him down the stairs!

“What will be the end of all this?” cried Amelia. “Mr. Huyck, for Heaven’s sake, do try to pacify my father!”

“Go and pick up your master,” said Bos, turning to Peter, “or I will send you down the same way!”

Peter, though very impudent and generally not afraid of any one, did not seem inclined to try the strength of Bos’s arm, and, without awaiting a second command, went downstairs.

Reynhove approached Bos, and remarked, “I think that you have been rather rash, sir; our friend is a little inebriated, and . . .”

“I treat him as such,” said Bos; “you will do me the favour of leaving this room; I do not want any visitors. Mr. Huyck, one word with you before you go!”

“I will leave you, sir,” said Reynhove. “I own that you are the master here; but allow me to add that I only came here accidentally, and that I cannot approve of the vigorous manner in which you act towards one who cannot well defend himself!”

“Enough!” cried Bos, with a movement of impatience, as he pointed to the open door.

Reynhove bowed to Amelia, returned Bos his haughty glance, and retired.

"What is the meaning of this disturbance?" asked Bos, as soon as Reynhove had gone.

I briefly explained the cause of our visit, and expressed my regret at being once more involved in such unpleasant quarrels.

"What I fear, Mr. Bos," said I, "is that this disturbance may attract the attention of the police. If Mr. Blaek should lodge a complaint against you, I do not think that you will be safe here much longer!"

"I have to dread the worst, that is certain," he replied; "but it is of no use to trouble myself about the future. I have been in more dangerous circumstances, and have always escaped. As yet there seems to be no suspicion aroused about me, and perhaps in a few days I may be able to settle my affairs, and will leave this country for ever!"

"Do not flatter yourself with doubtful hopes," said I; "you are acting rashly. Was it not imprudent of you to pay a visit to my aunt, a sister of the high bailiff?"

"On the contrary, nothing could be better calculated to disarm suspicion; but I will detain you no longer. Farewell! and may Heaven be with you."

I retired and hurried home. Probably my features still bore the traces of the emotions which the incidents of the evening had aroused within me, for my parents gave me an anxious glance. After I had told them that I had been in company with Blaek, Reynhove, and others—omitting, of course, all mention of my latest adventure—Susannah declared that she would present me on my next birthday with a little riding-whip and a drinking-cup, seeing that to my other amiable qualities I wished to add those of a horse-dealer and a wine-bibber.

"Ferdinand," said my father, "thwarted love may sometimes lead to foolish actions. Be on your guard!"

The following day, while on 'Change, I was accosted by Velters the broker, who, after some conversation about the commissions which he had to execute for our house, asked for permission to accompany me part of my way home. I fancied that he had perhaps some new business scheme to confide to me, and I felt not a little surprised when, having left the Exchange, he asked me to take another and quieter route home than my usual one.

"If your communication is of so much importance," I asked, "why do you not rather come home with me?"

"Pardon me; it is better that I should speak to you before you go home."

"Well, I hope there is no conspiracy brewing," said I, with a laugh. When we had walked on in silence for a few minutes, Velters began—

"I think that you have heard of the mean way in which Mr. Louis Blaek cheated me with a horse which I recently purchased from him. No doubt he thought that because I was in a certain sense dependent on his father, he could treat me as the lion in the fable treated his companions in the chase; but when I learnt how I had been cheated, indignation triumphed over every other consideration, and without delay I took legal advice. My counsel dissuaded me from taking proceedings against Louis Blaek, as I had too much to risk by quarrelling with his father; and reluctantly I resolved to abandon my ideas of revenge, and not to think any more about the affair. This morning I received a letter inviting me to call upon the high bailiff. I went there at the appointed time, and was at once introduced to your father, with whom I

found that scoundrel Jasper—one of Mr. Louis Blaek's associates in the horse-swindle. Your father asked me whether I desired the return of the money which I had paid for Blaek's horse, or whether I feared that such a proceeding would injure me. I hesitated for a moment; but as I wished to show that no fear of material losses would prevent me from seeing myself righted, I replied that I should like to have my money returned. Upon this your father gave orders that Mr. Louis, who was waiting in an adjoining room, should be admitted to his presence. He came, and I thought he looked rather confused at seeing Jasper and myself in the room. Your father reproached him with his disgraceful behaviour, and ended by telling him either to return the money or to suffer the consequences of an action for fraud. At first Mr. Blaek demurred, but ultimately he promised that the money would be returned, observing, at the same time, that none but you could have instigated your father to prosecute him, as you were present at the club on the day when he jocularly mentioned the sale of his horse; he added that such conduct did not surprise him in one who had enticed him into a strange house in order to illtreat him."

"What! did he have the impertinence to say this?" I indignantly exclaimed.

"The high bailiff at once asked him what he meant by those words, and remarked that if Mr. Louis had any complaint to make, he should not hesitate to come forward, even if it were against his own son. Mr. Blaek appeared to reflect for a moment, and then said that he would rather leave the matter alone, whereupon your father asked him who had thrown him downstairs at the house of the portrait-painter Heynz."

"What! my father knew this? . . . but why should I be surprised at anything?"

"At this Blaek answered, 'Sir, I do not accuse any one as yet; but your son did not behave as I should have expected an honourable man to have done. If you will listen to my servant, he will tell you that he prevented him from coming to my aid, while some other person illtreated me.'

"The high bailiff replied, 'Mr. Blaek, we will inquire into this matter; and, in any case, rest assured that justice shall be done.'

"With this the young gentleman took his departure. Then, however, there occurred something else, and I am afraid I did wrong in what I said at the time. As soon as we were alone, your father asked me whether I knew you. I answered in the affirmative.

"'Yes,' said he; 'you met each other at Helling's. Allow me to ask you a question. Were you the gentleman whom my son saw home?'

"'No, sir,' I replied, with some surprise, 'I did not have that honour; your son left earlier.'"

"Ah!" said I, "now the thundercloud will burst."

"There was not the least change noticeable on your father's features," continued Velters; "and yet, when he told me that my presence was no longer required, I fancied that the tone in which he spoke was tinged with annoyance, and I felt that I had rendered you an ill service by telling the truth. This pained me; but I could not have told a falsehood, and so I thought the best thing to do would be to give you timely warning of what had transpired, so that you might be prepared for any emergency."

"Indeed," said I, "you have rendered me an ill ser-

vice; but you have done well in telling the truth. I was compelled to tell my father a falsehood, and I must now suffer the consequences. But we are near my father's house; let us part here: it might bring you into trouble if we were seen together just now. I am thankful for the service which you have rendered me, though it has spoilt my appetite for dinner."

Velters left me, and I returned home very ill at ease. On entering the dining-room I dared hardly lift my eyes; my father looked very grave, and spoke but little; my mother sighed, and gave me a sad and half-reproachful look. As for my sister, at first she made some attempts to enliven the conversation, but she soon perceived that it was useless, and remained silent, so that our meal passed off like a Quakers' meeting. Then my father desired me to follow him into his study—"if your other occupations," he added with a sneer, "allow you any time for a brief interview."

I told him that I was at his disposal, and followed him with a beating heart. He sat down, and asked me to do the same, with a solemnity that augured ill for what was to follow. His features were stern as usual; but in his eyes and in the depressed corners of his mouth an expression of sorrow was noticeable, plainly showing that he suffered more than he would express.

"Sir," he began, after having looked at me in silence for awhile, "I can well understand why Mr. Blaek would not sanction your further acquaintance with his ward; and I regret that the entreaties of your mother should ever have persuaded me in taking so foolish a step as I have done."

"What do you mean, father?" I asked. "A foolish step! . . . I cannot understand you."

"I honour a prudent man," continued my father, "who will not deliver a ward intrusted to his care into the hands of one whose behaviour augurs so unfavourably for her future happiness."

"My behaviour!" I repeated. "What can Mr. Blaek have to reproach me with?"

"What, sir! A young man who, on the day of his return to his parents, when, above all, his mind should be occupied with pure and elevating thoughts, is not ashamed to bring a mistress with him—who allows his pious and unsuspecting aunt to come into contact with a woman of no character; one who, in order to disguise his visits to his mistress, tells me a lie to my face, and declares that he takes nightly walks with Velters; one who, returning from his drunken revels, has his rival thrown downstairs—you perceive that I am well informed—and who, in spite of all this, still dares to imagine that he may claim the hand of a respectable girl, to ask me what I mean! O Ferdinand! how deeply have you fallen!"

"Father," said I, as calmly as I could, "of all the charges which you have brought against me there is but one to which I must plead guilty—namely, that I told you a falsehood with regard to my walk with Velters. As for my acquaintance with the young lady who lodges at Heynz's, I have no cause to be ashamed of it. You promised me that you would not again mention this matter."

"I did so because I placed implicit confidence in your sincerity and upright conduct. But now, that you yourself own that you have deceived me in one instance, how can you expect me to put faith in any of your assertions? As a parent I consider it my duty to admonish my

son when I see him hurrying along the road to ruin ; and as a high bailiff, who is to guard the public peace in this city, I shall know how to put a stop to your irregularities."

" My position is a very painful one," said I, " especially as my defence would be extremely easy, did not a sacred duty bind me to silence."

" Enough of this, sir," said my father, rising ; " I know the value of such childish talk. In future your movements shall be watched, depend upon that. As your father, I shall take care that you do not disgrace my honest name ; as high bailiff, I shall prevent you from creating further disturbance in this city. I have done with you : I will detain you no longer."

" No, father," I exclaimed, as I rose from my seat and grasped his hand, " we must not part thus. I leave you in the hope that you will one day have a better opinion of me."

A knock, Heynz's usual signal, disturbed us.

" Wait a moment !" cried my father. " No, never mind," he continued ; " it is better thus. Come in."

Again he sat down. Heynz entered, and looked at me with some surprise.

" Go on," said my father ; " you know my son. What is the news ? "

Heynz took his note-book, and as usual began to read a long list of arrivals and departures, interspersed with some provisional arrests and with different police information, to which my father attentively listened, made an occasional remark, and at intervals jotted down a line or two in a book before him.

At last the elaborate catalogue of misdemeanours and successful espionage came to a conclusion, and Heynz closed his note-book.

"Is there nothing else?" asked my father.

"Nothing, your honour, except a few cases of pocket-picking."

"Nothing else?"

"No," replied Heynz, with another glance at his pocket-book.

"No? Indeed! then it is my turn," said my father, giving him a sharp look. "Last night, at the house of William Heynz, a quarrel arose, in consequence of which Mr. Louis Blaek was thrown downstairs. Mr. Heynz, who is so well informed as to what occurs in the city, does not appear to know what goes on in his own house."

"Your honour," faltered Heynz, giving me a look of alarm, "I did not think it worth while mentioning this matter."

"That is not for you to decide. Who was it that provoked the quarrel? Well, you need not look at my son. Answer!"

"Your honour—I really know little or nothing about the whole affair. I was not at home; and when I learnt what had occurred, I thought it was best not to be too particular with regard to such little escapades, in which young men of the highest families are Involved."

"Indeed!—so, in your wisdom, you imagine that there exists one law for the rich and another for those who are less favoured by fortune? But I have not yet finished. The said William Heynz gives shelter to suspected persons, and is not ashamed to permit a certain young lady, a lodger in his house, to receive visits from young libertines!" At these words my father looked at me very significantly.

"Pardon me, your honour, but can I suspect a young

lady whom your son has honoured with his visits, and who is acquainted with your sister? Besides, what does it concern me, now that her own father has arrived, who also lives at my house? I cannot blame the man for throwing Mr. Blaek downstairs because he refused to leave his room. A man must be master in his own house!"

"Certainly," remarked my father. "What is your lodger's name?"

"Van Beveren, of Deventer."

"William Heynz gives shelter to a person calling himself Van Beveren, without investigating as to whether such a name exists. Meanwhile I am enabled to assure him that, from information received, such a name is not known in the town of Deventer!"

"Not known!" repeated Heynz with amazement, "the notary Bouvelt has recommended me these people!"

"Be careful," said my father. "But, perhaps, my son will tell you their real names."

"I am no detective," I replied sullenly; "and even if I knew this stranger's secrets, it would be very mean on my part to divulge them. You cannot desire that, father!"

My father looked at me long and searchingly. At length he remarked—

"There is something behind this which I cannot understand. Meanwhile, Ferdinand, I will as yet believe that you are less guilty than I had suspected; but still I must not neglect to take such steps as I consider necessary. Heynz, you'll take care to keep me well informed as to the movements of your lodgers, and at the same time you keep an eye on my son. As soon as

you notice anything which you may consider suspicious, come and tell me. If I discover that you conceal the smallest trifle I shall no longer require your services!"

"What, father!" I exclaimed, "it is on a mere suspicion that you place me in the same category with criminals and bad characters! Pray, let Heynz stay another moment. He can tell you whether I have been more than three times at his house, and whether each time Helding was not the cause of my visit; whilst it was only by a mere accident that I was brought in contact with the stranger and his daughter."

"I have already told you that I suspend for the present my opinion of your conduct," replied my father. "If you are not guilty, you can have nothing to fear from inquiry; if you have done wrong, it will be a caution to you in future. I will now no longer detain you."

I wished him good day, and with a heavy heart I returned to our office. As soon as I arrived there, Mr. Van Baalen told me that there was an important negotiation pending, and asked me, as a favour, to call immediately upon the identical notary whose name I had heard mentioned in connection with my mysterious friend Bos.

I agreed, and left the office, musing over the strange whims of fate whereby all that I heard or did became in some way or another connected with Bos and his daughter. At the same time I felt some curiosity to see this notary, whom I pictured to myself as some great magician who possessed the key to all the secrets which so disturbed my peace of mind and my

domestic happiness. For I did not doubt for one moment that this visit of mine, although it was made with a very prosaic and matter-of-fact object, would yet tend to new complications in the drama in which I played an unwilling part. My forebodings did not deceive me.

XVIII.

I ASCENDED the steps of Bouvelt's house and rang the bell. The door was soon opened, and I was shown into a little room, where I had to await my turn for an interview with the notary. I stood at the window, and amused myself by gazing at the passers-by. Hardly had I been thus occupied when a carriage drew up in front of the house, from which I saw old Mr. Blaek alight; the next moment he entered the room.

It was evident that my presence was very far from pleasant to him. He returned my greeting with a stiff bow, sat down, produced a pocket-book, opened it and began looking for some papers. From this I inferred that he did not wish to enter into any conversation, and I resumed my former attitude without taking any further notice of him.

In this position I spent a rather tedious quarter of an hour, when at length I heard a bell ring in the room above, and shortly afterwards a voice in the hall exclaimed—

“Excuse me, I have left my umbrella in the parlour.”

The door of the little room was opened, and to my astonishment I beheld Amelia's father, spectacled as usual, and attired in his favourite crimson coat.

He soon recognised me, as I perceived from a slight knitting of his eyebrows.

In order to get his umbrella, which stood in a corner, he had to pass by Mr. Blaek, who was still seated at the table intent on the papers before him.

Having approached him, Bos stood still, looked at him for a moment and took a step backwards.

"James Blaek!" he exclaimed.

"Frederick Van Lintz!" replied Blaek, turning pale, as he leaped from his chair, and looked at his old acquaintance with alarm and amazement.

"The same," said Van Lintz; "I see that you still recognise my voice in spite of my . . ."

"But how dare you . . .? Good Heavens! . . . just reflect . . ." and with a sidelong glance he endeavoured to make him understand that they were not alone.

"Oh, that does not matter," said Van Lintz, with a smile; "Mr. Huyck will not betray me; and, besides, I have no choice, and must take time by the forelock. I could not have met with a more favourable opportunity; I have long desired to have an interview with you."

"With me! and what can you have to say to me? . . . But, for Heaven's sake, do not speak so loud! Remember that your safety is at stake."

"That depends upon yourself. You alone can assist me; and you'll do so for the sake of our old friendship, and for the sake of our dear brother who is in heaven."

I noticed that Mr. Blaek again changed colour.

"Be silent, I entreat you," he whispered, as he wiped away the perspiration which covered his brow. "I will gladly help you; but let us go to some other place; do not stay here."

"Pardon me, gentlemen," I interposed, "I do not wish to intrude; I will retire to the hall. I suppose I shall soon see Mr. Bouvelt."

"Oh, what is the use of it?" replied Mr. Blaek in an agitated voice; "Mr. Huyck has heard too much already. How can you be so indiscreet!"

"What disturbs you?" asked Van Lintz, as he stood with folded arms, leaning against the mantelpiece. "Who in the world can blame you for exchanging a few words with an old acquaintance, with your late brother's relative? Mr. Huyck knows as well as you do that the police are at my heels, and my safety has long depended upon him alone. One word from him would have been enough to endanger my life; but he has not uttered it, and he will not utter it now. From him I have therefore nothing to fear, and I think he will not at all object to your getting me away from here as soon as possible."

"On the contrary," I quickly remarked, "Mr. Van Lintz's sojourn here, and his secrets, have occasioned me already sufficient trouble and annoyance, and I shall feel extremely thankful to Mr. Blaek if he will put a stop to them."

"Ah!" said Van Lintz, with a smile, "and you would consider yourself free to divulge my secret when once I should be away from here?"

"Undoubtedly," I replied; "such was our agreement, was it not?"

"Certainly; but Mr. Blaek might find it rather unpleasant if he were known to have had a hand in my escape."

"Why should I mention it? I trust Mr. Blaek has too good an opinion of me to look upon me as a spy?"

"Certainly," said Blaek, in evident confusion, "I have a most excellent opinion of Mr. Huyck; but," he con-

tinued addressing Van Lintz, "is this a fit place to speak about your affairs? Come to my house, or . . ."

"To your house?" repeated Van Lintz; "no, no; it would perhaps be rather unpleasant for your son to meet me there after the lesson I gave him last night."

"Eh! what! You are then the Mr. Van Beveren? . . . but you are right; my house is not a fit place . . . but come with me, I shall find you a safe place of refuge. We can arrange all that in the carriage. Perhaps Mr. Huyck will be kind enough to excuse me to Mr. Bouveld, and to tell him that I had no time . . . or whatever he pleases."

"Very well, then," replied Van Lintz; "Mr. Huyck, I will not yet bid you farewell, for it appears that by some fatality we must continually be brought in contact with each other; no doubt we shall meet again."

"I have only one word of advice to give you," said I; "make haste, for one hour's delay may be fatal to you; at least, I can assure you that Heynz's house is no longer a safe refuge for you."

He thanked me with a nod.

"Will you promise me, Mr. Huyck," said Blaek, as he turned to me and pressed my hand convulsively, "not to mention this encounter?"

"I have already told you that I am no spy," I answered rather haughtily, "and I repeat what I have said to Mr. Van Lintz, that I shall only mention my meeting him when it will be my duty to do so."

The two gentlemen retired, and I soon saw them drive off together.

Shortly afterwards I was summoned into the notary's presence.

It is needless to give an account of my interview with Mr. Bouvelt. For frequently as his name may have been mentioned in the course of this story, and whatever the influence may have been which he unconsciously exerted over my adventures, the part he played in them was of too subordinate a nature to deserve any special mention.

XIX.

ON leaving the notary's house I felt somewhat more at ease. From the presence of Van Lintz there, I inferred that he had at length procured those papers to which he had attached so much importance, and that therefore there would be no occasion for his staying any longer in a city where he ran such a great risk of being discovered. On the other hand, the few words which he had exchanged with Mr. Blaek inspired me with some hopes that the latter would assist his old acquaintance, and facilitate his escape across the frontiers; in which event I foresaw that the time would soon arrive when I should be allowed to reveal what I had seen. The following day I was at work in my room when Helding's name was announced to me. Feeling annoyed at once more being brought face to face with an inmate of Heynz's house, and fearing that his visit would only tend to excite fresh suspicions, I scolded the maid-servant for having said that I was at home. For a moment I hesitated whether I should not let the old man know that I was too much occupied to receive him; but, on second thoughts, I altered my mind, and told her to show him upstairs.

He soon made his appearance, and, after repeated courtesies, he sat down and thanked me effusively for the trouble which I had taken in seeing him safely home on the night of his bacchanalia. But gradually the con-

versation began to flow in a more interesting channel, and I prepared myself for some startling news.

"I was very sorry to hear," he remarked, "that Mr. Louis Blaek met with such an unpleasant adventure at our house."

"Yes," said I, "but I think we had better not touch upon this subject again."

"You are right, sir. But stranger things have since occurred. Who could have thought that Mr. Van Beveren . . . ?"

"Well?" I asked, beginning to feel interested.

"Well, he has run away."

"Has he gone?" I exclaimed. "Thank Heaven for that!"

"No one knows where he is gone to," he continued, somewhat surprised at my joyful exclamation.

"And his daughter?"

"She is still here, but she will not remain much longer; at least Heynz will not allow her to stay in his house."

"No! and what has happened then?"

"I will tell you, sir. Last night my pretty housemate invited me to come and drink a cup of coffee with her; for I must tell you, sir, she does occasionally ask me in the evening; at any rate, it cannot be said that she is too proud to have a little chat with an old man like me; and she seems amused when sometimes I recite a few of my verses."

I was somewhat surprised at Amelia's tastes; but, on second thoughts, I understood that, after what had occurred, she preferred not to be alone during her father's absence, and that Helling's presence would, to some extent, set her mind at ease.

"And her father was not at home?" I asked.

"That's just the best of it," he answered with a smile.

"I was alone with her, had lighted my pipe, and was just about to read my little poem on 'The Dimple,' when her papa came home.

"'Well, papa,' she asked, 'did you succeed?'

"'Yes,' said he, and he produced a bundle of papers from his pocket, some of which he put into a desk, which he locked, without paying the least attention to me."

"That was not polite," I observed.

"Mr. Van Beveren is very rude, for he all at once turned round to me, and said—

"'Mr. Helding, if you like another cup of coffee, you are welcome to it; but drink it as quickly as you can, for I have something to say to my daughter.'

"'Oh!' I replied, 'I do not like to inconvenience any one, and I will rather go at once;' for I felt vexed. You see, I am very easily led, but I do not like people to offend me."

"And did you go, then?"

"Not yet, as you shall hear. The best part is coming now. As I was preparing to go, in comes Heynz, and begins to chat.

"'Ah, Mr. Heynz,' said Mr. Van Beveren, 'you are the very man whom I want. I leave town to-night, and I wish to pay what I owe you. At the same time I must ask you to take care that my daughter receives no more unwelcome visitors.'

"'Well, well,' said Heynz, 'are you going out of town so late? Going to Deventer, I suppose?' he added with a jeering look.

"Mr. Van Beveren gave him a glance, as much as to say, 'That is not your business!'

"'Be kind enough,' he replied, 'to give me my bill, and I will pay you up to the end of the month.'

"‘ May I ask,’ said Heynz, ‘ whether there are any more gentlemen of your name in Deventer?’

“‘ You are inquisitive this evening, Mr. Heynz?’ said Mr. Van Beveren, with a face as if he wanted to devour him.

“‘ I only mean to say,’ continued Heynz, ‘ that I have heard that the name of Van Beveren is not known in Deventer.’

“‘ That is very curious ; the name is common enough elsewhere. But, Mr. Heynz, you might at least wait until you are deputy-bailiff before annoying me with such impertinent questions.’

“ Then you should have seen Miss Amelia’s face, the poor thing turned as white as a sheet. Heynz looked sour enough too, I can assure you.

“‘ Sir,’ said he, ‘ your name may or may not be Van Beveren ; but although I am no deputy-bailiff, such an official might come here and ask you some unpleasant questions.’

“‘ My friend,’ retorted Van Beveren, ‘ when a deputy-bailiff comes I shall answer him, but not you. If you really were so clever a detective as you pretend to be, you would have discovered the money of which Black Peter has robbed me, or you would at least have given me some clue to its discovery.’

“ I was stunned. ‘ Heynz a detective !’ thought I. Had you ever imagined that, Mr. Huyck ?”

“ I half suspected it,” I answered, with a smile ; “ and how did it all end ?”

“ Well, Heynz turned as red as a turkey-cock, and gave a sharp answer. At one moment I was afraid that Van Beveren, or whatever his name may be, would take him by the collar and treat him in the same fashion as I

heard he did Mr. Louis. But all at once he became silent, and sat down with the greatest coolness. Heynz now saw that he would gain nothing by his anger, and said in a lower key—

“Sir, I must warn you that you are considered a suspicious character, therefore tell me frankly what you have come to do here? As the landlord of the house I have some right to ask this.”

“Look here, Mr. Heynz,” was the reply, “I pay you your rent like an honest man, and I do not know that you have any cause for complaint against me. This is a free country, and therefore I do not see that you have a right to prevent me from going wherever I choose. My daughter shall remain here until she has found better lodgings. I am going away this evening, and you may set your spies after me if you like, and have my movements watched; but now I will ask you kindly to retire.”

“Heynz at length appeared to see that he could get no further information, so, muttering something to himself, he left, and I followed his example; and, as I learned this morning, Mr. Van Beveren has started for Utrecht by the night boat.”

“I wish him God-speed,” said I, astonished at Van Lintz’s boldness and imprudence in leaving thus by a public conveyance where he could not fail to be detected. Before he went away, Helling begged me to remind my father of the promise which he had given him to make inquiries concerning the fate of his unfortunate daughter.

“I will do so,” said I, although it is unnecessary. My father never forgets a promise; only have patience, my dear Helling, and you shall obtain the desired information. I trust the result may be satisfactory.”

The following day, as I happened to have an hour to spare before dinner, Susannah availed herself of the opportunity to make me accompany her to Aunt Lina's. Whilst engaged with my aunt in conversation, we heard a carriage stop.

Some one was coming upstairs. The door opened, and Harriet Blaek stood before us. She looked charming as usual, but there seemed to be a gloom spread over her features. Observing us, she remained standing at the door in evident confusion.

"Come in, Harriet dear," said my aunt. "I am glad you have come to pay me a visit, child."

"How do you do, Miss Huyck," said Harriet, approaching with the air of one who takes a desperate resolution; "pardon my intrusion, the servant asked me to walk upstairs. I did not know that you had company. I came to return you the book which you lent me. Good morning, Susan dear, how are you?" as she shook Susannah's hand affectionately.

She bowed to me as stiff and formal as if I were a stranger; and although a faint blush suffused her cheeks, her eyes spoke of cold indifference. Susannah and I looked at one another; we were at a loss how to account for this strange behaviour.

I placed a chair for her, but she pretended not to see it, and sat down in another part of the room.

"Did you like the book?" asked my aunt. "They are sermons, I have forgotten whose."

"Oh yes, Miss Huyck," she answered, "it is a beautiful work, and my uncle has kindly bought me a copy."

"Indeed; that's right. And how is your uncle? Quite well? I am glad to hear that. And how are you

yourself, Harriet dear? Methinks not so well as when I last saw you."

"I am quite well, madam."

"No, really," continued my aunt, "you do not look very bright. I suppose the bad effects of that accident at sea have not yet left you. Well, that was a providential escape indeed."

"You have not suffered from it since, I trust, Miss Blaek?" I asked.

"No, sir," she replied, with icy coldness; "and I am doing my best to efface that occurrence with all its consequences from my memory."

I was quite stunned at these words, for I well understood their purport. Susannah looked at her friend as though she would ask, "Do you mean what you say?" but my aunt in her simplicity remarked—

"That is not right, Harriet. Such a fearful occurrence, which plainly shows you that the Lord does not forsake those who cry unto Him in their distress, should not be readily forgotten, rather let it serve as a theme for your everlasting gratitude to Him who has saved you."

"You are perfectly right, Miss Huyck," said Harriet; "I expressed myself wrongly. I am deeply sensible of the debt of gratitude which I owe to Heaven, and I never hope to forget it."

After a half-hour's conversation, in which Miss Blaek did not take a very active part, the latter rose.

"Miss Huyck," she began, with some hesitation, "I must ask you to excuse me; I may not stay longer; it is later than I thought, and . . ."

"Do you want to go already?" asked my aunt; "you have only just come."

"My uncle expects me; we dine early, as we are going out of town this afternoon."

"Are you going to drive home now?" asked Susannah, abruptly rising from her seat.

"Yes, dear," replied Harriet; "it is rather late, otherwise I should have asked you to come with me, to be driven to your house."

"That is unnecessary," resumed Susannah; "but I should like to have a drive with you. I have to go to Carlin's to buy some ribbon; it is in your way if you can take me there."

"Oh! with pleasure," said Harriet, in a tone which denoted that she could have done without the company of her bosom friend.

"You can stay a little longer, Ferdinand," said my aunt, "I wish to speak to you."

Harriet took her leave, and Susannah, in going, gave me a look as much as to say that she would watch over my interests.

"Well, Ferdinand," said my aunt, "I want a word with you on a very disagreeable subject. Your father was here yesterday, and cautioned me against these people living at Heynz's. He says that the name of Van Beveren is an assumed one, and he believes that I ought also to be on my guard with the daughter. He referred me to you for an explanation of his words. Now what does it mean? Is that girl really wicked? If so, I must be greatly mistaken; for I looked upon her as one who was pure of heart and active in all good works."

"I know nothing to her disparagement," I answered, pleased to find that my father had at least not communicated his suspicions to my aunt; "and as regards

Mr. Van Beveren," I continued, "Helding told me that he had gone away."

"Yes, so your father mentioned, and said also that Van Beveren left the day before yesterday by the boat, and landed at Nieuwsluis, but did not again enter the vessel, and disappeared, no one knows where. I only mean to say, although we may not condemn our neighbours, that there must be something wrong with them. It is very strange that Heynz has such people in his house."

"So it is," I observed; "but I know nothing to their discredit; although I must confess that I shall be glad to hear no more of them, for ever since my return I cannot take a single step without being compelled to learn something about them. It seems as though they were my evil genii, for they are always and everywhere following me."

I had scarcely finished speaking when my words were confirmed. The door was opened, and Amelia entered. I may add that my aunt was always at home to everybody, and her servants never announced a visitor whom they had seen before, but sent him upstairs at once. We were all three confounded. Amelia was the first to recover from her surprise, and I even believe that my presence gave her some encouragement.

"Madam," said she, turning to my aunt, who was still too much surprised to be able to utter a word, "I come to you as a suppliant. In all this great and populous city, I have no one on whose kindness I can rely except on yours and your nephew's," she added, as a blush suffused her features. "I know that my visit and my request are unwelcome; I shall not blame you if you

send me away uncomforted, and I shall ever be thankful for what you have done for me already."

"Sit down, young lady," said my aunt, who, from the extraordinary traces of emotion on Amelia's features, perceived that her visit was made with no common object; "I like to help where I can; but can I offer you something? You look so distressed. Tell me what troubles you?"

"Shall I retire?" I asked, feeling little inclined to be again mixed up in Amelia's affairs. "Perhaps the young lady wishes to see you privately."

"No; stay a little longer, Ferdinand," said my aunt; "and just get that little phial from the corner shelf and bring me the water bottle. Come, take this, my dear, it will do you good."

"I did not think I could be any longer so deeply moved," said Amelia; "I have withstood without flinching greater trials and misfortunes than those I have met with to-day; but never, no, never yet have I suffered such a deep humiliation. I have endured the vicissitudes of my life with patience and resignation, but I was not born to be insulted by a wretched spy, as if I were an outcast of my sex."

"What has occurred? Who has insulted you?" asked my aunt and I almost simultaneously.

"I am speaking of Heynz," said Amelia; "what he said does not signify. His expressions may perhaps be excused; he has never associated with respectable people; he could have turned me out of his house, for he is the landlord, and has a right to do so; but it is mean and unpardonable in him to insult me at a time when I am alone and forsaken by all. I cannot, I may not, stay any longer under his roof; but whither shall I

go? You alone, madam, can assist me. I entreat you to tell me of a place of refuge amongst honest people. I shall not stay there long, I promise you. Money I have in abundance. I desire nothing more than a temporary shelter, however humble it may be, where I may find some rest and be safe from obtrusive visitors."

"This is all very well," said my aunt; "but I hear such strange stories about your father and yourself, that I must first learn something more about you before I can introduce you to other people."

"That is very sensible, sister," said a voice behind us.

We all three turned round and beheld my father. As I afterwards learned, he had gone to Heynz's house in order to have an interview with Amelia; and not finding her at home, had followed her and entered my aunt's residence soon after her.

His unexpected appearance produced various impressions on us. My aunt's features brightened, and it was evident that the arrival of her brother helped her out of a great perplexity. Amelia looked at my father without fear, but with surprise and alarm, as though she surmised that her fate depended on his decision. As for myself, I was taken aback; for not alone did I foresee fresh troubles arising from a wrong construction of my presence in the room, but I also trembled for Amelia; and it was only because I knew my father's strict feelings of justice that I still retained some hopes.

The high bailiff looked in turns at Amelia and at me, with a scrutinising glance. She did not cast down her eyes, but rose, whilst her features assumed that haughty expression which her father so often displayed. She was evidently offended at what she considered our rude behaviour. My aunt was the first to break the silence—

" You are just in time, brother," said she ; " this is the young lady of whom I have spoken to you."

" So I see," said my father. " Young woman," he continued, turning to Amelia, " I regret to find such obstinacy in a person of your age and appearance. How could you have the presumption to come to the house of an honourable lady, whilst you knew that your right place is not here ? "

" Sir ! " exclaimed Amelia with indignation, and looked at him as dignified as a queen ; and then, turning to me, she asked passionately, " Who is that man ? "

" It is my father," I whispered; " for Heaven's sake . . . "

" Well, then, tell your father that I should have expected a different treatment at his hands. I am not astonished that an uneducated person like Heynz should insult me, but I did not think that Mr. Huyck would follow such an example."

" I should advise you to adopt a less lofty tone," resumed my father. " I would be respectful towards a beggar-woman if her behaviour were proper, but I would treat even a princess with contempt if she acted like you."

" Farewell, Miss Huyck," said Amelia, as with a bow she was about to retire.

" Stay ! " said my father, in a tone of authority which all who heard it were compelled to obey ; " be thankful that I do not order my attendants to bring you before me at the Town Hall instead of coming here myself to examine you ; remember that a frank confession will do you more good than a pride which is entirely out of place."

Amelia stood in the centre of the room, with folded arms, compressed lips, and eyes flaming with indignation ; her whole attitude denoted that she yielded only

to compulsion, but that she had determined not to reply to any questions put to her.

"I do not know," continued my father, somewhat surprised at such an unusual contempt of his authority, "whether I should have treated you with so much consideration if it were not for the sake of that scapegrace —pointing to me;—I must confess that he has well bestowed his affections."

"What!" exclaimed Amelia, with a sudden change in the expression of her features, and looking at me with astonishment. "I do not understand you," she continued, with an anxious glance at my father.

"You do not understand me?" asked my father, himself surprised at the sudden change in her attitude.

I thought it was time to interpose.

"The young lady cannot understand you, father," said I; "for there is no question whatever of affections."

"Wait until you are spoken to, and do not interfere," said my father, with a severe look; "is this meeting as accidental as all the others were? You have for ever forfeited my confidence."

"Father, I assure you . . ."

"Go! I will hear no more."

I sighed and prepared to obey his command, when Amelia, who, during this dispute had been suffering from violent emotions, and was blushing and turning pale alternately, placed herself between me and the door.

"Stay a moment," said she; "I do not know," she continued, addressing my father, "what accusations have been brought against me; but this I do declare, before Almighty God, that your son has no cause to be ashamed of our slight acquaintance, or of the services which he has rendered me. His behaviour was

noble, generous, and irreproachable; and it is foul slander alone that can put a wrong construction on his actions."

Her words sounded so truthfully; her voice, freed from the asperity which had marred it before, was imbued with such a tender pathos, and such a noble spirit animated her whole being, that my father was touched by it. Accustomed as he was to see through the masks worn by deception, and to distinguish the true from the false, he had no doubt that, though she might not be wholly innocent, she was not such a woman as had been described to him. He reflected for a moment, then motioned to me that I could stay, and hastily asked—

"What is your name, young lady?"

"Amelia," she replied immediately, reassuming her haughty attitude.

"Your family name?"

"For the present I bear no other name than Amelia."

"And your father? He calls himself Van Beveren; but that is not his real name; what is his name?"

"He can tell you that himself."

"Very well. But he is not here. Where is he staying at present?"

"I have never been in the habit of watching his movements," replied Amelia. "I leave that to others," she added with bitterness.

"I cannot blame you if you refuse to betray your father. But you will not hesitate, I trust, to answer me as to what concerns yourself. Where did you make my son's acquaintance?"

"No doubt he himself will inform you on that point," said Amelia.

For one moment I thought that my father would

resort to the usual means for obtaining a confession from accused persons, namely, by making them believe that their accomplices had already confessed. But whether he was too upright to degrade himself to such artifices, or whether he doubted their utility after the presence of mind of which Amelia had already given proof, he shook his head and remarked—

“ Young woman, as a father, I must repeat that you are but aggravating your case by your obstinacy. You and my son journey together in a boat, and no one knows where you come from. You leave him at Amsterdam, but you repeatedly receive his visits. Your father arrives and disappears again, like a shadow, bearing a name which is not his own. Violent scenes take place at your abode. Is all this not calculated to awaken suspicion against you ? ”

Of all this address Amelia had apparently only taken notice of the fact that I had kept her father’s secret.

“ Your son has acted most nobly,” said she. “ He has exposed himself to obloquy ! He has incurred the displeasure of his nearest relations ! He has become a prey to slander for our sakes ! But do not accuse me of ungenerosity or ingratitude ! ” she continued, turning to me ; “ if I persevere in my silence, and neglect to vindicate you from the slander which has been brought against you . . . and also against myself. Heaven knows I may not speak ! ”

“ And now, sir,” said she, addressing my father, “ send me to prison if you choose ! You have the power to do so, and I can offer no resistance. But I declare to you that I have done no wrong ; and one day, when you will be convinced of my innocence, it will grieve you bitterly that you treated me with harshness and injustice.

Am I in the Netherlands, those regions renowned throughout the world as the home of Liberty? An innocent girl is persecuted, slandered, and condemned without cause; and her sole crime is that she loves her unfortunate father, and will not betray him to his enemies!"

"No," said my father, with more gentleness, "if you are innocent you need fear no punishment. I shall put to you no further questions. Far be it from me to make use of a daughter as a tool for betraying her father. But such strange and mysterious circumstances are attached to your sojourn here that I cannot permit you to leave the city until this affair shall be cleared up. You can choose your own abode, and you shall be safe from all unpleasant visitors. It will depend on your father whether that stay shall be long or short!"

At this moment a servant entered and handed a letter to my father, which had been left by a stranger, with the request that it might be immediately delivered into his hands. He read it, and an expression of surprise came over his features. Looking for a moment at Amelia very attentively, he remarked, in an undertone—

"Is it possible that I did not think of this before? She is the image of her father. Read this note, Ferdinand. Perhaps you will now consider yourself at liberty to speak!"

The note ran as follows:—

"HONOURED SIR,—Little Simon has just been here. He positively assures me that Mr. Van Beveren is none other than the Count of Talavera, for whom we have been looking! Is it not remarkable that the gentleman should have stayed in my house, and that I did not even suspect him? However, he is bound to be caught:

spies have been sent out everywhere.—I have the honour to remain your most obedient servant, HEYNZ."

"I suspected this," said I, returning the letter ; "but even this information does not allow me to break my silence. I can only speak when the Count is either arrested or in safety !"

"Indeed !" said my father coldly ; then, turning round, he took Amelia's hand very courteously—

"Sister," said he, addressing my aunt, "I have much pleasure in introducing to you the Honourable Miss Van Lintz, the daughter of Katie Reefsail, whom you may remember !"

"Sir !" exclaimed Amelia, turning pale, with a terrified look at my father.

"Pardon me," continued my father ; "I should have introduced you as Donna Amelia de Talavera. I deeply regret being compelled to prosecute your father, whom I esteem in many respects for his great merits. But the duty I have to perform will not prevent me from treating you with that consideration to which you may lay claim in your misfortune. Can I be of any service to you? You have some relations here on your mother's side, I believe ? Do you wish me to take you to them, and put you under their protection ?"

"Alas !" said Amelia, "not one of them would take pity on the wanderer's unhappy daughter. No, it is not with them, who perhaps hate or despise my father, that I shall seek refuge. Show me some humble, some safe retreat—it will not be for long . . . and I shall thank you, sir. But do not take me to relations, who would imagine they were degrading themselves in rendering me a service !"

"Child," said Aunt Lina, taking Amelia's hand ;

"you shall not go to strangers, neither shall you return to Heynz. I have plenty of room here ; stay with me. You can live as quietly as you like, and keep your own room. I shall tell the servant to allow no one to visit you before his name is announced !"

"Oh, my dear lady," said Amelia, as she burst into tears and embraced my aunt, "this kindness is more than I deserve !"

"Well," said my aunt, "is it not written, 'I was a stranger and thou gavest me shelter'? You accept my offer, do you not ?"

"With whom would I sooner stay than with you, madam? Are you not the only one who has treated me with kindness ?"

"My nephew must also have some credit for that," said my aunt.

"No," said Amelia, as a sudden thought seemed to strike her, "no, it may not be. I forgot that your relations have already had enough trouble with me. No, I cannot stay with you!"

"And why not?" asked my aunt; "my relations will not trouble you. Did I not tell you that you could remain quietly in your own room ?"

"I respect the young lady's delicacy," said my father, "but I believe that she could not do better than accept your proposal. The world will then be enabled to conclude that the unfavourable reports which have been spread about her, and in which I myself believed, are false. For the rest she will be quite free here, and no one shall molest her either with questions or visits."

"No," replied Amelia; "for your sake too, Mr. Huyck, I cannot stay with your sister. The world, with its tendency to draw wrong conclusions from everything,

would accuse you of collusion with one whom you must prosecute, if you allowed his daughter to enjoy the hospitality of your sister's house ! ”

“ Your objection is just,” answered my father, “ and raises you in my estimation ; for, after the manner in which I have spoken to you, it is very generous of you to have any consideration for my reputation ! But people may say what they like, I shall not trouble myself about it. Your reputation is of no less importance than my own ; and I can conceive no better means of silencing all foolish talk than by your accepting my sister's proposal.”

Amelia at length agreed, and my aunt at once gave orders that her boxes should be fetched, while my father wrote a note to Heynz, authorising him to send them. We now took our leave, and left the two ladies to themselves.

“ She possesses the same independent spirit that has always characterised Baron Van Lintz,” remarked my father, when we had walked in silence for awhile. “ I pity her ; for, though the Count may evade our researches for a little longer, he must in the end be caught, and what will be her fate then ? ”

“ You are no longer annoyed with me, father ? ” said I, taking his hand.

“ I begin to understand that you were in a difficult position ; but I cannot yet conceive why you should persist in your silence, now that everything is discovered ! ”

“ Excuse me ! ” said I, “ but if I told you how and where I formed the Count's acquaintance, would you not then know where to find him ? ”

“ There is something in that,” replied my father, with

a laugh. "Well, I will look forward to your further vindication. Meanwhile I am glad that you are not in love with Miss Van Lintz!"

After dinner that day I had a conversation with my sister. The mystery of Harriet Blaek's behaviour at our last meeting was now explained. As might have been expected, the spell which seemed to be cast over everything I did was again the cause of this unpleasant incident. It appeared that, having received a one-sided account of the scuffle at Heynz's house between the so-called Mr. Van Beveren and her cousin, and of the reasons for my presence there, Miss Blaek had entertained the most exaggerated notions about my relations with Amelia; and hence her coolness and indifference. I wrote her a letter in which I endeavoured to explain and justify my actions, although, for obvious reasons, I refrained from giving her any hint as to who Amelia really was.

Through Helling's gossip Heynz's secret functions were made public, so that he could no longer exercise his profession as a portrait-painter. However, as one of the deputy-bailiffs had lately retired on a pension, Heynz was appointed provisionally to this post, with a promise that he should fill it permanently if he succeeded in arresting the Count of Talavera, who was still at large. About the same time Susannah also received a note from Harriet Black, in which she acknowledged the receipt of my letter in very brief terms. She expressed her belief that my behaviour had no doubt been somewhat misrepresented, but as her uncle, to whom she was so much indebted, was greatly opposed to our further acquaintance, she felt it her duty to beg of me to take no further trouble about her. These harsh words quite

unmanned me ; but I perceived that for the moment all I could do was to bide my time and to see whether Mr. Black would not alter his mind.

The following Saturday was my mother's birthday, and as invitations had been issued for a party at Heizicht, I went there the day before, with a view of assisting my aunt. I found her in the best of health and spirits, and extremely busy ; she scarcely gave herself time to welcome me, but ran in hot haste through the house, superintending the festive preparations in their most minute details, and giving her instructions to an army of servants and workmen engaged about the villa gardens, with an air of gravity and importance which would have done credit to a general reviewing his troops on the eve of a battle.

Later in the afternoon, at my aunt's request, I rode to old Martha's farm-house, to see if the arrangements were satisfactorily carried out for a picnic which was to be given there on the following day.

I had hardly crossed the threshold when the old woman came running up to me as fast as she could.

"What is your pleasure, sir?" she asked, casting an uneasy glance at the staircase leading to the garret.

"I shall go up there," said I, following her glance ; "I think I may find some spare chairs in the room."

"For Heaven's sake, sir, don't ruin me," she faltered, in a hushed voice ; "he is here again."

"What!" said I, "is he then insane?" and, half unconsciously, I began to ascend the stairs, and, whilst I perceived not only Van Lintz, but also old Mr. Blaek, accidentally overheard the following conversation.

"I really do not know of any other means to get you away from here unobserved," said the latter.

"Well, we shall have to decide upon your plan then," answered Van Lintz; "I trust that they will not arrest me before that time."

"And you promise me," resumed Mr. Blaek, "that even though you may be arrested, you will not make the matter public?"

"Why should I do so, as you say that your son and your niece love each other?"

I was just about to withdraw, for I did not wish to play the eavesdropper, but these words excited my curiosity, and I could not resist the temptation.

"They do love each other . . . they shall marry," said Mr. Blaek; "if I deceive you, you shall be free to do as you like. I assure you it is the truth. Pray destroy that fatal document. It might fall into strange hands; give it to me; I will . . ."

"Oh no, James Blaek," said Van Lintz, with a grim laugh; "you shall have it when I shall be in safety, and not till then; and then you can burn it yourself. I know too well what your motive is in rendering me assistance to give up what may be of service to me."

"Oh!" replied Blaek, "you will not take an undue advantage of me; you will not put me to shame. I have done as much for you as was in my power; I have even done more than I promised: I have written to The Hague . . . I will exert all my influence to put a stop to all persecutions . . . for the sake of our old friendship, do not ruin me."

"I have pledged you my word," said Van Lintz; "let that suffice. I shall expect you to-morrow. Endeavour to leave this place unobserved. I will ring for Martha and ask her whether the coast is clear."

As he spoke he called the old woman. I hesitated for

a moment, but thinking that she would no doubt tell Van Lintz of my visit, I determined to go in myself, and whispering to Martha, who stood trembling behind me, to go downstairs, I opened the door.

"Mr. Huyck!" they both exclaimed, the one in a tone of surprise, the other with an expression of alarm.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," said I, smiling, "for disturbing you. Mrs. Van Bempden has sent me to make some preparations for to-morrow's festivities, and I came into this room, little thinking that it was occupied."

"I confess," said Van Lintz, "that my visit here is ill-timed."

"If Mr. Blaek would prefer to retire unobserved," I continued, seeing that he trembled with agitation, "I will with pleasure accompany him part of the way."

"You are very kind, Mr. Huyck," said Blaek, with a faltering voice. "I thank you."

"I hope to see you when you return," said Van Lintz, looking at me with his penetrating eyes.

I bowed and left the room. Mr. Blaek followed me, and we both went out by the back door, through the garden, which was quite deserted, and entered the forest path. I observed that my companion was so intensely agitated that he walked with difficulty. I offered him my arm, wondering at the strange freak of fate, which made me the escort of a man who had thwarted my most heartfelt wishes.

I should have liked to have asked him for an explanation of the words which I had heard by accident; but the matter was of too delicate a nature to be lightly touched on. I perceived that he wished to say something, but was at a loss to commence the conversation. Several times he opened his mouth as if about to speak,

but his tongue seemed to fail him. At length he summed up courage, and with a heavy sigh and a faint voice he began—

"I cannot recover from my surprise at seeing Mr. Huyck, the son of the high bailiff . . . in relation with a person, who . . . who . . ."

"Our surprise is mutual, sir," I interrupted him with smile.

"Oh," he replied, with a sidelong glance at me, as though he wished to discover if I believed him; "with me it is a different thing altogether . . . I knew him formerly, and have done business with him."

"My acquaintance with the Baron is of a very recent date," said I; "he may, however, be quite at ease; I shall not betray him, and I promise you that I shall not make any mention of your visit. I trust that this will satisfy you."

"Yes," said he, evidently pleased with my assurance. "Meanwhile, I am extremely obliged to you. I am very sorry indeed that I was under the necessity of . . . refusing your honoured proposal . . . but you can understand that the happiness of my niece . . ."

"You do not think, sir," I interposed, "that I will acknowledge that your niece can be happy with another."

"Not at all," he resumed, "I only meant to say . . . you see. . . . I cannot express myself at present as I would wish. In a few years' time, when she'll be of age, and still free, I may gladly consent; but just now . . ."

"I will not deny," said I, "that when I was on the stairs, I heard you refer to a marriage between your son and your niece."

"You listened!" he exclaimed, trembling and pale

with rage as well as with terror ; "it was very wrong of you, sir, although," he added, no doubt reflecting that I might have heard more than he liked, and that, therefore, it was best to conciliate me, "I cannot blame you for it ; you had a right to be somewhat surprised at seeing us there. I did not want to tell you just now, not wishing to give you pain, but the marriage between my son and my niece has ever been my heart's desire ; and I flatter myself that it will soon be an accomplished fact."

"It is impossible !" I exclaimed, quite taken aback at this information.

"It is the truth : the young people love each other ; and I desire nothing more than their mutual happiness. Take my advice, Mr. Huyck, and renounce the idea of marrying Harriet. There are plenty of pretty girls in the Netherlands more favoured by fortune than my niece. But pray, take no more trouble now ; I shall find my way myself."

We had left the farm-house, and as I saw Mr. Blaek's carriage waiting, and found that he no longer required my guidance, I took leave of him.

"You see," said Van Lintz, on my return to the garret, "I have again taken refuge here, as I could not find a better place !"

"I fear that you will not be safe much longer," I replied. "You need but put your head out of the window and you will perceive that this farm is no longer unoccupied ; to-morrow a number of guests will arrive."

"I shall not await their arrival."

"And do you really think that you will escape unobserved ? I have no doubt that Heynz will take the most active measures for your arrest now that he knows your real name."

"Perhaps!" he resumed gloomily; "I am playing a game of chess; it is ten to one that I shall be checkmated, and yet, as long as one move is open for me I will not give up the game. However, if my persecutors are not here before to-morrow, they will run a great risk of finding the bird flown."

"Shall you leave this country?"

"For ever, I hope."

"And your daughter?"

"She will follow me, I trust," he replied with a sigh.

"Do you know where she is staying at present?"

"I do; and, in due time, pray thank your worthy aunt in my name for what she has done for an unfortunate, forsaken orphan. As for you, Mr. Huyck, I am greatly indebted to you. I know that my daughter and I have given you much trouble and inconvenience. I hope one day I may be able to render you a service in return."

I should have liked to ask him why he was so interested in Harriet's marriage with her cousin, but it struck me that there was some secret connected with it in which she was involved, and with which I had nothing to do. Van Lintz himself helped me out of my difficulty.

"Did you hear anything of our conversation just now?"

"I have, by accident; but I was so astonished to see you that . . ."

"You need not apologise. And what did you hear?"

"Not much, your words were a mystery to me."

"Not much, no; but something, eh?"

"I repeat," said I, "that I understood nothing of your conversation. I was only astonished to see Mr. Blaek, who is haughty enough at other times, so humble and confused."

"It must indeed have been a strange sight for a third person," said Van Lintz, "to see the wealthy master of Guldenhof, the proud Amsterdam merchant, whose word is of more importance than the manifestoes of half-a-dozen German princes, shake and tremble before a wretched wanderer, who has been condemned to death in six or seven different States, whom the sleuth-hounds of the law are following as though he were a criminal, and who can hardly find a spot to lay down his head. But the rich Mr. Blaek knows that one word from me would be enough to cast him into such abject misery as a poor wanderer like myself never has and never shall experience. But enough of this, my hand shall not needlessly draw aside the veil which conceals his secret; therefore, my young friend, forget what you may have heard."

"I wish I could forget all that has occurred during the last few weeks," I replied; "but it is getting late, and I must go, for my presence here might give rise to suspicions. . . . Pray do not show yourself outside; and, if you take my advice, do not even approach too near the window; one might see into this room from the garden!"

We both looked down into the garden, and observed the stealthy eyes of Simon the pedlar staring at us from behind a low wall. We stepped back and looked at each other, and when I again approached the window he was gone.

"You may be sure," said I, "to-morrow, or perhaps this evening, the police will be here."

"I recognise that spy," said Van Lintz; "it is the same hawker who followed me to Utrecht, and whom I deceived. Had it not been for my daughter, I should long since have surrendered to those who are seeking me."

"I trust," said I on parting, "that I may not find you here to-morrow."

"I must yield to destiny," he replied with indifference, and shook me cordially by the hand.

I mounted my horse, and rode back with all speed to Heizicht.

XX.

ON the following day many guests, as well as all the members of our own family, arrived at my aunt's farmhouse. Mr. Blaek and his son were also there, but Harriet sent an apology for her absence on account of a slight indisposition, which did not cause me much uneasiness, as I well understood its meaning. I could not help throwing a furtive look at the house, as though I could read on its walls whether the wanderer had successfully escaped. But I did not receive much information from that source, and I fruitlessly scanned old Martha's features to see whether they betrayed any signs of emotion, for her whole attention seemed to be engrossed by the festive preparations.

The company were all in a large marquee in the garden, when one of the servants approached my father and whispered something in his ear. He frowned, and immediately rose from the table.

"Has anything happened?" asked Aunt Louisa, while my mother gave him an anxious glance.

"I shall be back directly," he replied; "don't trouble yourselves about me," and he left the tent.

I gazed after him uneasily, for an inward voice told me that my father's absence was in some way connected with the arrest of Van Lintz. This supposition was confirmed when, a moment afterwards, the same

servant came to tell me that the high-bailiff desired my presence.

I found him in company with another gentleman, who was the bailiff of Naarden, as I afterwards learned. At his side stood Heynz, who seemed to be greatly agitated.

"Sir," said my father to me, frowning, "can you tell me where the person is with whom you yesterday had an interview in the farmhouse?"

"The gentleman to whom I presume you allude I met here quite by accident," I answered, "as I had a message from my aunt to Martha. I do not know where he is gone to."

"I tell your honour that he is still here," said Heynz; "all my men, who have been watching in the neighbourhood, declare that they have not seen him leave. If I had but suspected who that Mr. Van Beveren really was . . . but who could have imagined such a thing? To think that the man whom we have so long sought lived in my own house for a fortnight! *C'est bien embêtant!* But he must and shall be found."

"Exactly; if he has not yet gone, he must be here still. What do you think, Mr. Huyck?" remarked the bailiff of Naarden.

"I quite agree with you," said my father in reply to this most logical conclusion; "and I think we had better search the farmhouse again, while the constables guard all the places of exit."

We began a minute search of every room in the place, including, of course, the attic where on the previous day I had seen the Count. Closets, larders, cellars, and pantries were all ransacked, even the beds were examined, but to no purpose; the bird had flown, and we returned to the garden. As for old Martha, although at

first taken aback by our abrupt intrusion, she retained her presence of mind wonderfully.

"Ferdinand," said my father, "when are you going to tell me why you take such an interest in the Count of Talavera? Why you are continually in his company? Perhaps you have even now assisted him in his escape!"

I thought the time for speaking had come, and that a straightforward account of the whole affair might perhaps be of service to the Count.

"We have always met by accident," said I; "but you could not expect me to betray a man who has saved my life?"

"Saved your life! When?"

"I will tell you;" and I was about to give my father an account of what had occurred, when my aunt was seen coming towards us, followed by the rest of the guests, alarmed at our long absence and at the presence of the police.

"What is the matter?" inquired my aunt.

My father replied—

"Baron Van Lintz, whom you may recollect, slept here yesterday, and has done so before, if I am not mistaken."

"Yes," said Martha, answering my aunt's scrutinising glance, "he has been here, and his daughter too; and now, thank Heaven! they are gone, and at liberty, as I hope. And look here, madam, I'm an old woman, you may send me away from the farm and let me wander about the streets if you like, but I couldn't do otherwise than I have done. Would you be so inhuman to drive away a man whom you have nursed when he comes to you and says, 'Mother Martha, the police is after me, and I cannot find a safe refuge'?"

"There is something in that. I cannot imagine that my farmhouse has been dishonoured by the visit of a Spanish Grandee. What has become of poor Van Lintz? And is it really his daughter who is staying with you, sister?" asked aunt Van Bempden.

"She need not suffer for her father's errors, and I flatter myself that she has found a more suitable refuge in my house than at Heynz's," replied aunt Lina.

"There at least she shall not be annoyed by rude visitors," remarked my father, with a look at Louis Blaek, who stepped back in astonishment.

"What!" he exclaimed, "was that young lady . . . ?" He did not finish the sentence, as he was aware that the manner in which he had formed her acquaintance did not do him much credit.

"Your honour," said Heynz, drawing my father aside, "I have once more questioned everybody; they saw no one leave except Mr. Blaek's coachman with the carriage!"

"The carriage is near here, in the village of Huizen," whispered my father. "Mr. Blaek and the Count are old acquaintances."

With this my father stepped aside with his colleague, in order to decide upon the measures to be taken, after which the latter retired, whilst Heynz and the police left soon after. This incident, however, marred the pleasures of the company. My aunt, thinking that a change of scene could alone put the minds of her guests at rest, gave orders for the horses to be harnessed. Whilst the ladies were engaged in preparing for the return journey to Heizicht, I told my father the story of my acquaintance with the Count.

"If you have done wrong," said he when I had finished,

"you have been sufficiently punished by the misunderstandings from which you have suffered during the last few weeks. I will not reproach you: your position was a difficult one; and stronger heads than yours would have succumbed. Now, let us drop the subject."

The next moment Mr. Blaek's carriage returned. I saw the old gentleman make a slight gesture to the coachman, who replied to it with a nod; and this confirmed me in my suspicion how the Count made his escape.

We now drove back to Heizicht, and sat down to dinner. Scarcely was our meal concluded, when Van Baalen, my partner, unexpectedly made his appearance, and brought me news of a very unpleasant nature. One of our brigs, the "Fortune," had been caught in a gale, and was wrecked on the coast of the island of Terschelling. The crew was saved, and the cargo unshipped, but the vessel was said to be a total wreck. As this might involve us in a serious loss, I resolved to leave for Terschelling the following day at an early hour, to see if I could be of assistance to Captain Pulver in unshipping and reloading the cargo.

My father also received a parcel from Amsterdam, which contained, besides some papers for himself, a letter from Amelia for Aunt Lina, in which she warmly thanked her for her kindness, and informed her that she had joined her father, and was going to leave the United Provinces with him for ever. She apologised for leaving so abruptly, and prayed her not to ascribe her behaviour to a want of gratitude, as she had been compelled to start at once.

"She girded up her loins and departed," said Aunt Lina; "but I say, the Lord hath blessed her departure,

for she follows her father, whom she is bound to honour and obey, although he is a son of Belial, full of iniquity and injustice."

All this was not calculated to revive the fast-waning cheerfulness of the guests. Mr. Blaek and his son were especially silent, and it seemed to me as though it was a relief to them both when their carriage was announced. Soon after my partner and I also left for Amsterdam.

XXI.

NEXT day I rose early, and, having received my partner's instructions, I took leave of my family and got on board the sailing packet for Harlingen. As we were putting off from the wharf, I was astonished to see Lucas Helding come rushing to the quay.

"Hallo!" I exclaimed, when he stepped on board, "what are you doing here, friend Helding? You would have been the very last man whom I should have expected as my fellow-traveller."

"Is it possible?" he cried, "Mr. Huyck! well this is a pleasant surprise! Are you also going to Harlingen, sir, if I may ask?"

"I am going farther than Harlingen," I answered. "But what drives you to the coast of Friesland?"

"The object of my journey is a sad one, sir; but I cannot explain it here."

As he spoke he looked significantly around him at the passengers walking about on deck. Afterwards, when we had left Amsterdam, and nearly all had gone below, he confided the object of his voyage to me. It appeared that the inquiries set on foot by Heynz, by my father's orders, had at length met with some success, for Helding had been informed that his daughter Clara lived at Harlingen, as servant in a tavern of no very great repute. As soon as Helding heard this he quickly resolved to make

the voyage and endeavour to fetch back the stray sheep. It was touching to see how, on the one hand, he shuddered with shame at the thought of a meeting with her who had dishonoured his irreproachable name ; and, on the other, how anxious he was to see her again, and, if possible, to take her back with him.

“ Oh ! ” said he, “ I know very well, Mr. Huyck, that she has sinned ; but still she is my daughter, my child, the sole inheritance of her departed mother. Thank Heaven, the dear woman did not live to see the shame of her child, although if she had lived she would perhaps have prevented her from straying from the path of virtue. Oh ! perhaps it is chiefly my own fault. I loved the child too much to make her any reproaches. If I could only once more have her with me she would improve, and happy days might yet be in store for us ! ”

About seven o’clock in the evening we landed at Harlingen. As I had nothing better to do, I went with Helding to the authorities. We were informed that a girl and a sailor had left the town three days ago, and, probably, had gone to the island of Terschelling.

“ If that be true, Helding,” said I, “ you need not yet despair, as I am going to Terschelling myself; you can make the voyage with me.”

“ Oh,” answered Helding gloomily, “ I fear it will be to no purpose ; . . . but still I gratefully accept your kind offer ; . . . for, you see, I was not prepared for such a long voyage, and I do not think that my money would suffice to pay for much farther travelling.”

The following morning, at the appointed hour, we were on board a fishing smack, and towards noon we came in sight of the island of Terschelling. It was one of those fine warm days frequently met with in the begin-

ning of September, and although the wind was still blowing from the north, there were sufficient signs that we should have more favourable weather than we had hitherto experienced. The village of West Ter-schelling looked very picturesque in the distance, its lofty steeple, and bright red roofs, shaded by luxuriant linden trees, standing out in bold relief against the white downs ; while a number of pilot and fishing-boats, which were entering and quitting the harbour, lent much animation to the scene. To the north-west, between the far protruding sandbanks, lay a wreck, deprived of masts and rigging, in which, with some difficulty, I recognised our unfortunate "Fortune."

On arriving in the harbour, we saw on the quay and the pier a large number of the juvenile population staring at us with rustic curiosity. But I soon discovered a few adults amongst the crowd, one of whom I asked where I could find Captain Pulver.

"Show these gentlemen the way to Jack Reynzen's," said the man to a boy near him, who, after another inquisitive look, took the sandy path leading to the village.

We followed our guide, escorted by the entire youth of the place. Some of them ran forward and announced our arrival to the villagers, so that we soon beheld Captain Pulver himself coming to meet us.

"Well, master," he exclaimed, on seeing me, "that is a nasty piece of business! I am very sorry for the old ship, but it is nobody's fault, for we have had ugly weather, and we may bless our stars that no lives are lost. Meanwhile, master, I am glad to see you well."

"And how about the ship and the cargo?" I asked.
"Is there much damage done?"

"Most of the cargo is saved," answered Pulver; "but you may give the ship up altogether, I tell you: she is gradually working deeper and deeper into the sand, and although you still can see her to-day, to-morrow there won't be a stick of her left. But who is that gentleman, if I may ask?" he inquired, pointing to Helding.

I briefly introduced him, and we all marched off to the abode of Jack Reynzen, who, besides being an inn-keeper, was also sheriff, and was therefore one of the most important personages of the island. A rubicund wooden figure, with fat red cheeks and a blue beard, which, according to the lines painted underneath, represented Father Neptune, adorned the front of his house, and seemed, in its stooping attitude, to invite the passers-by to enter and taste Reynzen's brandy, while the words 'good lodgings' written over the door, bore conclusive testimony to the utility of this active islander.

Reynzen was a man of about sixty, but still strong and vigorous, with a ruddy complexion, and small crafty grey eyes. He welcomed us with exceeding politeness, which, however, somewhat abated when Pulver told him that I was the owner of the stranded vessel. I could easily gather from the manner in which he looked at me that he was endeavouring to ascertain to what extent he could overcharge me for warehousing the cargo of the "*Fortune*." However, his features brightened again when I ordered lodgings for myself and Helding. No doubt he thought that he might easily win back as host what he lost as storekeeper through my arrival. He offered us pipes, and began a conversation which soon had the effect of drawing Pulver from his corner in order to tell his tale of shipwreck.

A thin, withered little man now appeared, offering a

curious contrast to Reynzen's powerful figure. He was not attired in frieze, like the other villagers, and his coat and hat, though of old-fashioned make, spoke of a mainland origin. His features, marked by the smallpox, were far from captivating; while the curling lip and dilated nostrils seemed to denote that his organ of self-esteem was exceedingly well developed.

"Hillo, bailiff, is that you?" said Reynzen. "These are gentlemen from Amsterdam, who have come here to arrange about the 'Fortune,' and," turning to us, he said: "this gentleman is Mr. Doedes, the bailiff."

I rose and bowed to the dignitary, who, having briefly acknowledged my salute, turned to Reynzen, and began to converse in the following disjointed phraseology:—

"No smoking . . . no time . . . visit patients . . . council assembled . . . how is the patient?"

"Not too well," replied Reynzen; "I wish she had stayed away."

"Is any one ill here?" I asked.

"Yes, a young woman from the mainland; the doctor does not think much about the case either." With this he pointed to the individual, who appeared to be a physician as well as deputy-bailiff.

"From the mainland?" I repeated; "and when did she arrive?"

"Only three days since; I believe from Harlingen."

Helding turned deadly pale, and looked in turns at myself and the host.

"And what's her name?"

"The fellow who is with her—her husband, as I hope—calls her Clara; that is all I know about it."

"Oh, my daughter! my Clara!" cried Helding, as the

tears gushed from his eyes. "Where is she? Oh take me to her."

"Be calm, my dear Helding," said I; "you hear that she is ill; your unexpected appearance might produce unfavourable consequences. What does the doctor think?"

"Hem!" said he; "inflammation of brain . . . bile . . . delirious . . . no excitement . . . *abstinentia et quies.*"

I asked the doctor's permission to go and visit the patient with him, and promised Helding to tell him how his daughter was.

A man, with his back turned towards us, was seated at the bedside of the sick woman, holding her hand in his, whilst his head rested against the wainscot. On our approach he looked up, and I recognised—not quite unexpectedly—Sander Gerritz, otherwise Black Peter.

"Make room," said the doctor; "been asleep . . . ? Still delirious?"

"She is calmer, but very weak," observed Sander, with a sigh. "She is quite unconscious, and has not said a word to me yet;" then, recognising me, he uttered my name, quite amazed.

"Come here, and make room for the doctor," said I.

The doctor felt the patient's pulse. Meanwhile I took Sander aside, and told him in a whisper that her father had come.

"Good Heavens, this too!" said he, covering his face with his hands.

"Is she able to see him?"

"What would be the use of it? She knows no one—not even me."

"Fever abated," said the doctor, rising; "calmer . . . *meliora symptomata* . . . drink barley-water . . . lemon juice . . . send medicine . . . come again to-morrow . . ."

"Is it possible!" cried Sander, with relief; "is she really somewhat better?"

"Still weak . . . take wine . . . beef-tea . . . write prescription." As he spoke he produced a pen and paper from his pocket, and sat down to write his prescription.

"Clara," said Sander, stooping over the bed, "don't you know me?"

At these words the patient lifted up her head and looked about her. Her features were still handsome and regular, but the wan cheeks and the red marks under the eyes and along the nose showed that a dissipated life, rather than illness, was the cause of the premature decay of her former charms.

"Where am I?" she inquired in a faint voice, putting her hand to her forehead. "How did I get here? I have been very ill, I believe, but I am better now; I should like something to drink."

"Here," said Sander, as he handed her a cup. "Do you really feel better, my darling?"

"Ah! are you here, Sander?" she resumed. "That is right; but how did I get here? I have suffered much . . . but 'tis strange, I feel no pain whatever now."

In spite of the doctor's assertion, I did not agree with him in his sanguine hopes for her recovery. The cessation of all pain, and the dull, glassy eyes, seemed to me no very reassuring symptoms, and I began to fear that Helding would soon lose his daughter for ever.

"Who is that gentleman?" she asked, pointing to me.

I considered this a fit opportunity for preparing her for her father's visit, so I checked Sander in his reply.

"I have come from Amsterdam," said I, "with a message from a gentleman who loves you sincerely."

"A gentleman in Amsterdam . . . who loves me!" she repeated, with an expression of anguish. "Who is there in Amsterdam that loves me! O God! there was once one who told me so . . . but he was a villain . . . he was the cause of all my misery."

"He of whom I speak," I continued, "has always striven for your welfare. Just think; is there no one in Amsterdam whom you are bound in duty to love and honour?"

"What!" she exclaimed, "do you come from my father . . . from my father?"

"Do you feel strong enough to see your father if he were here?" I replied.

"My father! Here? O Heaven! let me ask his forgiveness and die. Oh! but that is impossible."

"It is not impossible," said I; while at the same moment the doctor returned, followed by Pulver and Helding, who trembled so violently that he could hardly stand on his legs.

"Where is she? Where is my child?" cried the old man, as with outstretched arms he entered the room. She was sitting half upright in bed, and it was with great difficulty that Sander prevented her from leaping out and throwing herself at her father's feet. Helding embraced her passionately and sobbed aloud.

"Forgive me, father," was all she could utter, whilst Sander, overpowered with emotion, hid his face in his hands.

"Shiver my timbers," said Pulver, wiping away a tear. "I would sooner sit all through a stormy night in the topgallant yard than witness such a scene."

"Calm yourself, my darling," said Helding with a trembling voice. "Thank God that I have seen you once more; we shall forget the past and only think of the future; mind you soon get better, then you shall go with me to Ansterdam, and we will live quietly together, as we did of old."

"No, father," she replied sadly, "that will never be. I know that I shall not live much longer. Oh! little did I expect the undeserved blessing of seeing again my father before my death, and of receiving his forgiveness. Alas!" she continued, looking at him, "your hair was not grey when I left you. It is I who have caused you such sorrow! But, father dear, say a kind word to Sander; he found me at Harlingen, and, in spite of all my faults, loves me still; he has not forsaken me in my illness, but has nursed me tenderly and affectionately."

"Sander Gerritz!" cried Helding with amazement, when the former looked him sadly in the face.

"Sander!" repeated Pulver, no less astonished. "What the deuce . . . !"

Here he became silent, as I beckoned him not to interfere.

"My dear Mr. Helding," observed Sander, "you know that I always loved Clara. I would gladly make her my wife now, in spite of everything; but Mr. Huyck knows that I cannot remain here, because . . . in short, it is better for her to return with you to Amsterdam."

"My child," said Helding, "come home with me; I know some influential patrons who will not forsake

us. There is the worthy Mr. Huyck . . . there is Mr. Blaek . . .”

“Blaek . . . ! Blaek . . . !” repeated Clara, while an expression of loathing clouded her features; “rather would I suffer the most abject misery than accept aid from one who bears the name of Blaek . . .”

“What!” cried Helling; “what have the Blaecks done to you?”

“Oh! do not talk about them,” resumed Clara. “Louis Blaek was the author of my disgrace! While Sander was at sea, he induced me to leave my dear, good father. He forsook me in my shame and misery, and when I dared not return to you, he forced me to . . . O Heavens!”

“And why did you not return to me?” asked Helling; “did you not know that my heart yearned for you?”

“Louis Blaek!” muttered Sander, “was he the scoundrel? Oh! that I had him here at this moment to repay him for his villainy.”

“I was too ashamed to return,” said Clara; “and so I sank from bad to worse . . . and now I must die, so young, and by my own fault! But I have been forgiven by those whom I have injured most—by my father and by my dear Sander; and that gives me comfort. Do not cry, Sander! ‘tis better thus. When, at your request, I left Harlingen, I was still anticipating the happiness of living with you; but now I know that I was not worthy of being your wife; and I should only have brought shame upon my father’s house—my death will be better for me, and for you too.”

“Come! you must not talk thus,” said Helling; “am I right, doctor?”

" You are certainly right," replied he, as he put back a bundle of papers into his pocket-book ; " she won't die—get better—not so much talk—*femina animal loquax*—too much fatigue—Hm ! strange—Sander Gerritz—heard the name before—hm !—letter from burgomaster—pirate—burglaries—cannot find—must be at home—hm !"

The latter part of this speech he muttered half inaudibly, so that most of those present, who were busy with the patient, did not catch the words.

" Come," he resumed, " too many persons here—rest necessary—I am going too—much to do—prepare physic—examine archives—visit patients—two farmers—broken arms—write to burgomaster—going."

He retired, and I did the same, as well as Pulver. We were soon joined by Sander, who evidently wished to leave father and child to themselves for awhile. When we had reached the garden, Pulver began—

" Now you won't deny that you are Sander Gerritz, and that I saw you at Mrs. Van Bempden's villa ? "

" No, certainly not, captain," answered Sander, offering him his hand.

" Be on your guard," I said, drawing him aside. " The doctor is also deputy-bailiff ; as far as I can make out from his words, it seems that he has received information about you, and I am afraid that this island is no safe refuge for you."

" I shall not leave this spot until Clara is better," said Sander ; " and as for Master Doedes, I am not very much afraid of him ; I have a little remedy at hand which will silence him."

After awhile Reynzen, Pulver, and myself left the inn to take a walk on the sands, and to arrange our

affairs together. What with Reynzen's charges for warehousing, his commission as an agent, and the amount of percentage for salvage, I was utterly disgusted; but in the end I was obliged to grant almost everything that he asked; and it was finally agreed that Captain Holmfeld, who commanded the Danish vessel "Kjöbenhavn," lying at anchor in the harbour, should carry the cargo of the ill-fated "Fortune" to Denmark.

XXII.

ON returning to the inn, Helding stated that his daughter's condition had not improved, and that she seemed to grow weaker every moment. Sander, who had been summoned before the bailiff, had come back, and did not leave her bedside, while Reynzen's wife and daughter stayed with her in turns.

Although a room had been prepared for Helding, he naturally preferred to spend the night with his daughter. As for myself, after having taken some supper, I retired with Pulver to an apartment where two bedsteads facing each other were placed for our accommodation. But I was not permitted to enjoy an undisturbed repose, for scarcely had I crept under the blankets when loud sounds of talking, swearing, and singing afforded me the unpleasant assurance that my bedstead was exactly adjoining the taproom, from which I was only separated by a very thin partition. Among the noisy voices there was one which it seemed to me that I had heard before, although I failed to recollect when or where. All this kept me awake, and I could not help envying Pulver who, being placed in a less noisy corner, lay snoring most sonorously. However, as I thought that those uproarious guests would not remain there all night, I patiently resolved to await their departure.

And, indeed, gradually they all went away, and I heard Reynzen bid them good-night. Only the one whose voice seemed familiar to me remained, and him I now heard inquiring—

“Well? Is not that fellow in the frieze jacket still here? I mean the chap who brought that pale-faced girl along with him !”

“Yes,” answered Reynzen; “but I don’t think he will attend to you just now, for the girl is very ill. I don’t imagine she’ll live till morning !”

“The deuce! Tell him that Andrew wants to speak to him.”

“Andrew!” I repeated to myself. I now wondered no longer that the voice was familiar to me. I sat upright in bed, and determined not to lose a single word of what would follow.

“Well, I’ll call him,” said the host; “but I doubt whether he’ll come.”

With this Reynzen left. It was not long before I heard the door open again, and some one entered the taproon.

“What do you want?” asked a man, and I recognised the voice of Sander.

“What do I want? Well, that’s nice! Did we not make an appointment to meet in this place? For what other reason did you come here then?”

“It is true,” answered Sander, with a deep sigh, “but I have been discovered. I have been summoned before the bailiff . . .”

“Well, and he let you off again; what did he want?”

“He told me that he had received orders for my arrest; but added that this island was of old a place of

refuge for those who wished to live a quiet life, and who could offer a surety that they would keep the peace.”

“Hang it!” said Andrew, “we might stand security for each other!”

“I handed him a certain sum as bail,” resumed Sander, “and we parted friends.”

“The deuce,” said Andrew. “I should also like to give him such a security; but I must get the necessary money first, so we must take counsel together to find some.”

“No, thank you,” said Sander, “my account is heavy enough as it is; and I don’t want to increase it.”

“Eh!” cried Andrew; “has the fellow turned childish? Here, sit down, Sander, and drown all those qualms in a glass of brandy!”

There was a moment’s silence. I heard chairs being moved to the other side of the partition.

“Old boy!” continued Andrew, “there is such a fine chance for us. That warehouse . . . I have had a peep inside . . . with one kick the door is smashed . . . it is full of tea, splendid stuff, man, and no mistake; and Joey lies in the harbour with his boat. In a whiff the whole lot will be on board, and no one will suspect us!”

“No, that shall not be done,” said Sander; “Huyck is a good sort of fellow, the tea belongs to him, and I shall not allow any one to touch his property!”

“Huyck, did you say? Huyck?” asked Andrew, evidently surprised.

“The son of the high bailiff of Amsterdam!” replied Sander; “he arrived yesterday, and is staying in this inn.”

“The deuce! In this case I shall have a double pleasure in the business. I have an old account to settle

with that confounded numskull ; and if I can annoy him, in one way or another, I'll not lose the chance ! ”

“ You shall,” said Sander, “ or we'll become bad friends ! ”

“ Well then, something else ; I am not going to be moored along here. As for that Master Doedes, I trust him about as much as I would a rotten plank. When he has got our bail into his clutches he will have no more scruple to surrender us to the authorities as I have to drink this glass of brandy. Look here, I know of a good trick to help us out of our trouble. This evening a hooker has cast anchor in the harbour, and she won't put to sea for a few days. Now, what do you say to paying her a visit ? Then we could take a trip on our own account ! ”

“ Look here, Andrew,” said Sander, “ I came here, 'tis true, to arrange our affairs with you and the other comrades, but I have since altered my mind. You can do as you like, and I shall not hinder you in the least, but don't rely upon my assistance ! ”

“ What the deuce do you mean ? Are you converted, or have you made your fortune ? And now that we want your help you would betray us, eh ? ”

“ I tell you again that I won't betray you ; let that suffice. The reason why I will not again put myself at your head does not concern you. I won't do it, and there is an end of the matter.”

“ It's that confounded minx, who has talked you into this ! ” said Andrew angrily ; “ she is a nice one, too ! But how the deuce can I take such a message to our comrades ? They will never believe me. And what are you going to do afterwards ? I suppose you've turned spy now ? ”

“ Never mind what I am going to do, that is my business,

I have heard what you had to say, and I wish you good evening ! I can't waste any more time now ; farewell!"

With this I heard him rise from his chair.

"But, hang it ! Is it Black Peter who speaks, or is it his ghost ?" asked Andrew, following him half-way out of the room. "Just think—a brand new vessel and a rich cargo ! I suppose you feel rather qualmish now, because that girl is ill ; but just think about it, and when you've made up your mind give me a hint. We shall remain at anchor meanwhile . . ."

Here his voice sank to a low whisper, and I could distinguish no more. It appeared, however, that Sander made no satisfactory reply, for at length I heard Andrew exclaim—

"You won't then ? Well, go and hang yourself !"

The next moment I heard him go out and slam the street door after him, while Sander also retired.

I thought the matter over. From what I had heard I considered it not improbable that Andrew and his comrades intended to surprise the Danish vessel and seize it, but I was somewhat reassured by the idea that they would not venture upon such a step without the co-operation of Sander. Meanwhile I felt it my duty to inform the captain of the "*Kjöbenhavn*," as well as the authorities of Terschelling, of the scheme, and I regretted that I had been unable to ascertain where the scoundrels were hiding. For a long time these thoughts kept me awake, until at length fatigue overpowered me and I fell into a slumber. When I awoke the sun was shining brightly. I saw that Pulver's bed was empty ; I rose, dressed with the utmost speed, and hurried down to the taproom. But I perceived neither Pulver or Reynzen, but only the landlady.

"Do you want my husband and the captain, sir?" she asked. "They went to the warehouse three hours ago. They did not want to disturb you, for you were so sound asleep."

"Do they imagine that I have come to Terschelling to sleep?" I remarked, somewhat annoyed.

I paid Clara Helding a brief visit; she was sinking fast. I begged her father to order anything which he might think desirable for her comfort; then, taking Sander aside, I asked to speak to him privately.

"I heard your conversation with Andrew last night," I remarked as soon as we were alone.

He blushed and cast down his eyes for a moment.

"Well," he replied, raising his head with some dignity, "then you have heard that I know how to appreciate your kindness."

"I have; and I thank you for the gallant manner in which you battled for my tea. I pity you, poor fellow! you desire to enter upon another career, but you are at a loss how to commence it, is it not so?"

"Oh, dear sir!" said Sander, shaking his head sorrowfully; "you think better of me than I deserve. When I landed on this island, it was not with the idea of becoming another and a better man. 'Tis true, I loathed the life which I had lately led, for I was not born to be a common highwayman. No; the roving life on the West Indian seas was more to my liking; and yet, I should never have even taken to it if Don Manuel's example had not encouraged me. It was he who fired my dormant imagination. What I had hitherto thought sinful and unprincipled, he taught me to look upon as noble and elevating. To follow him, to fight by his side on the ocean, and to carry death and desolation in my path,

had become a merit and a delight in my eyes ; and if already it seemed to me a high privilege to command his crew as lieutenant, how infinitely more proud was I when, on his departure, I was appointed captain ! I knew that my actions were unlawful, and that death would be my inevitable punishment when once I should fall into the hands of justice ; but, on the other hand, I was powerful, and more independent than an admiral, for he may be the first man of the fleet, but he only commands by the authority of the States-General. Well, I wanted to lead again such a life, and win back for myself such a high rank. I wished Clara to share my fortunes, for in spite of her faithlessness, in spite of all that has occurred, I still loved her. It was for this reason that I summoned Andrew and his comrades here ; for I wanted as soon as possible to seize upon a good seaworthy vessel, and once in the open seas, I would again have found my way to the Lake of Maracaibo and to my old companions."

" And so," said I, " to carry out your criminal, detestable wishes, you would coolly have massacred the crew of the vessel which you intended to seize ? "

" That is all past now," continued Sander, without taking heed of my question. " I have seen Clara, I have witnessed her suffering and her remorse ; I felt I was yet too soft-hearted to—pardon me—to play a part which requires a heart of steel. I have dismissed the idea, and I know well enough that my comrades will not venture upon the scheme without me. They'll soon separate; and Heaven grant that I may never hear from them again."

" And what are your further intentions ? "

" Can I think of the future while Clara lies on her deathbed ? " he asked somewhat reproachfully.

"Yes, you should do so," I replied; "you ought to better yourself, and that as soon as possible. Leave this country, where you can no longer live an honest life; the world is before you. Go to Russia; smart seafaring fellows like yourself are received with open arms there; go and offer your services, and if you do not attain a high position, you may at least occupy one of which you need never feel ashamed."

"I shall think of it; but do not ask me to come to any decision at present. I must first close Clara's eyes, then perhaps . . . Heaven bless you, Mr. Huyck."

He turned away and retired to the sick-room, whilst I went to the quay, and saw Captain Pulver puffing and blowing as he ran to and fro hurriedly, and giving the sailors his orders for the loading of the tea.

On my approach he asked me if I would like to make a short stay on board the "*Kjöbenhavn*," "for there is not much to be seen here," he said, "and Captain Holmfeld is a nice man, who will give us a hearty welcome, and then you can recommend him the tea yourself."

I readily agreed to this proposal, and in a very short time Pulver and I arrived at the harbour where the Danish vessel lay at anchor. I saw Captain Holmfeld awaiting us on deck, and beside him stood two persons wrapped in cloaks, whose features I could not discern.

We were well received by the square-built Danish captain, who asked me in good Dutch to stay and dine with him, as he was not going till the next day.

"By the by, captain," said I, "you have some passengers on board, I think; where are they? I trust they are not afraid of us."

"No," remarked Pulver, "we won't eat them."

"They are in the cabin," said Holmfeld, "and seem

to be nice people, but rather shy of strange faces. We will invite them to take a cup of coffee with us. Here, Mat, just run down and ask the lady and gentleman to honour us with their company. Tell them that there are no strangers on board except the captain of the ‘*Fortune*,’ and Mr. Huyck.”

We retired to the forecastle to drink some coffee, and scarcely had Pulver filled his pipe when the door was opened and I beheld—Amelia and her father! I was rather taken aback; my astonishment at their unexpected appearance was, however, not so great as it had been on former occasions. I think that I was already getting accustomed to such surprises. Not knowing whether their real names and conditions were known to the captain, I simply bowed. But though I was silent and on my guard, there was none of our company upon whom the sight of the new arrivals created so great an impression as on Pulver. The captain scarcely beheld them when he took such a leap from the bench on which he was seated, that his pipe fell to the ground broken to atoms, strewing the deck with tobacco and hot ashes, and he stood staring before him in blank amazement.

“Shiver my timbers!” he cried at length. “Am I right or am I wrong?”

“Do you know each other?” asked Holmfeld.

“I know this gentleman,” said Van Lintz, quite coolly; and, approaching me, he shook my hand.

“But . . .” resumed Pulver, “I could swear to it . . . and yet it is hardly possible . . . If I did not know that we were really lying off Terschelling, on board the ship ‘*City of Kjöbenhavn*,’ Captain Holmfeld, I should fancy that we were off the Antilles, and that I had seen your face before.”

"That is probable enough," said Van Lintz very quietly; "but I cannot say that I remember you."

"I am Captain Pulver, at your service—formerly in the service of the West India Company, at present sailing for Messrs. Van Baalen & Co.—and so your honour has bidden farewell to the craft? Well, you were right; there was very little credit to be got out of it."

Amelia trembled with fear, and looked in turns at her father and myself with a supplicating glance. Van Lintz, however, resumed with his former coolness—

"I do not understand you. My name is Bos; and I have never been in the Antilles."

"Your memory deceives you, Captain Pulver," said I; "I know this gentleman very well; and the likeness which you see to the person of whom you speak can be neither flattering nor pleasant to him."

"Then, I'll give it up," said Pulver; "I beg pardon if I made a mistake, but the adventure with the Don is always troubling my head."

"I did not expect to find you here, Mr. Huyck," remarked Van Lintz, as he sat down by the side of his daughter. "I presume that it is the wreck of your vessel that induced you to come. When did you leave home?"

I answered his question, and gave him a tolerably full account of my voyage.

Then Van Lintz, Holmsfeld, Pulver, and myself entered into conversation on the topics of the day, and we continued smoking and talking for more than half-an-hour, until, on the former's proposal, I went down to look at his cabin.

XXIII.

I KNEW very well that the visit to the cabin was but a pretext of Van Lintz for finding an opportunity to have a quiet talk with me. We only went down for a moment, and soon retired to the forecastle together.

“ I am glad to see you and your daughter both in safety, and at length free from all persecutions,” I began.

“ Yes, sir,” replied Van Lintz, as he pointed to the rippling waves, “ yonder lies the broad ocean and the road to freedom.”

“ It is a pity that you are obliged to seek that road far from your native land.”

“ My native land!” he repeated, with a bitter laugh. “ What do you call my native land? Is it that contemptible country in which I was born, where a man does not live, but merely vegetates, and where the monotony of such a life is only occasionally varied by some childish feud or family dispute? Is it those United Provinces, which, divided in manners and in interests, are continually quibbling with one another, and where a set of presumptuous merchants, who in other countries would be ranked with grooms and lackeys, want to be masters of the world? Or is it Spain, which has insisted on my extradition? I am a cosmopolitan, sir.”

I perceived that Amelia did not coincide with her father's views, for she shook her head and looked at him sadly.

"I well understand you, my child," said he, turning to her. "I guess your thoughts; you inwardly accuse me of misjudging others, while, in many cases, I have, by my own actions, caused the disasters which have befallen you as well as myself. It is possible; I never would humble myself before unjust authority, nor before laws which were framed by tyranny and intolerance. But enough of this; time is precious and must not be wasted. I feel bound to satisfy Mr. Huyck's curiosity, and to relate to him those incidents of my life with which he is as yet unacquainted."

I intimated my readiness to listen to him, and, having taken a cautious look around, he began his story:—

"I am descended from a noble family of the county of Zutphen. My father, Baron Van Lintz, whose youngest child I was, spent his days on his estate, as he had not sufficient means to move in the fashionable world, whilst his religion—the Roman Catholic—disabled him from holding any remunerative office under Government. I seemed at first to be destined also to lead the quiet, obscure life of a country nobleman; but fate decided otherwise. My mother, a Protestant, had some wealthy and influential relatives in The Hague and elsewhere, and they, apparently thinking me more than commonly talented, urged her to pay particular attention to my education, and agreed to furnish the necessary money. Although I made fair progress and realised their expectations, I felt no inclination, however, to become a scholar. I began to cherish a strong preference for the naval service, and

this feeling soon developed into a passion after having made a number of sea-trips with my uncle's yacht. This uncle of mine was the only person who did not condemn my inclination, and it was he who frequently amused me by his stories of travel and adventure. My other relatives deemed it ridiculous for me to enter upon a career in which, on account of my religion, I could never rise to any eminence, but by my uncle's assistance, I was at length received into the navy as a midshipman; and after a few years' service, either through the exertions of my patron, or else because I really had made progress, I was promoted to the rank of lieutenant. All this was very well, but now the barrier was finally closed against me; for, by virtue of some childish regulations, a Roman Catholic could not obtain at that time a higher grade in the navy of the Netherlands.

"Meanwhile I formed the acquaintance of Captain Reefsail's daughters. I fell in love with the younger, and soon my love was requited. The difference of religion, however, was an insurmountable obstacle in the eyes of the old captain. This greatly annoyed me, and I felt still more bitterly grieved when I daily saw officers, younger and less able than myself, rise above me, merely because they belonged to the State Church. At the commencement of my career I had taken but little notice of all this, but now my position became utterly unbearable. My noble birth, however, gained me admission into some of the highest circles, and thus I formed the acquaintance of the Spanish ambassador, who held out to me the most alluring prospects, if I would determine to enter the service of His Most Catholic Majesty. His proposal appeared all the more tempting to me, as, by

accepting it, I hoped to attain my most ardent wishes—a union with my beloved Cornelia, and a higher position in society. I persuaded her to fly with me, sent in my resignation, and was clandestinely married in the ambassador's private chapel. Then, furnished with some letters of recommendation, I went to Spain with my young wife. There I was well received. Some able naval officers were wanted at the time, and ere long I obtained the command of a man-of-war. At first fortune smiled on me. I succeeded in rendering some important services to my adopted country, and I was speedily promoted. Quite accidentally I became a diplomatist, and, having concluded a favourable treaty with Portugal, I soon rose in the king's favour. I was raised to the rank of Admiral, was made a Grandee of Spain, a Knight of the Golden Fleece, and Count of Talavera. In short, few were my equals, and the king only was my superior. My sole sorrow was, that my wife did not share in my honours ; she died shortly after my arrival in Spain, after having given birth to a daughter.

"But my prosperous career soon excited envy, and people did their best to hurl me down from my lofty pinnacle. Day after day I was attacked by slanderers and intriguers. For a long time the king did not listen to my detractors, but at length he began to waver, and his confidence in me diminished. I was sent on a mission to Mexico, and knew very well that this was equivalent to banishment, but I was compelled to obey. I thought it my duty, however, to guard against all emergencies, and I therefore forwarded some valuable and important documents to Holland, to be placed in the hands of a notary, on condition that they should not be given up, except on my own written authorisation. I left for Mexico, and

took my daughter with me, who, since the death of her mother, had been brought up in a convent. My absence gave a better scope to my enemies, and they accordingly availed themselves of their opportunity. I had spent about six months in the new continent when I was recalled to Spain. Scarcely had I set foot on board, than I was requested to surrender my sword, and was treated as a prisoner. On our voyage, our ship was attacked and seized by pirates. Everybody on board was butchered, and I only owed my own and my daughter's escape to the circumstance that I was recognised by one of the pirates, who had formerly served under me. I was taken to the stronghöld of the free-booters, and then my uncle and his stories rose to my mind, and I resolved to avenge myself on ungrateful Spain, and in future to lead the life of a northern Viking. I made known my intentions to my deliverer, who was delighted, and who mentioned my name to the pirates, as well as the disgraceful treatment which I had received as a reward for my services. Unanimously they chose me as their chief. What I did during the years I spent on the shores of the Lake of Maracaibo I will not mention : suffice it to say, that I took a terrible revenge upon Spain for the insults which had been offered to me ; the honest captain, who sits yonder smoking his pipe, can tell you how the name of Don Manuel was dreaded in the Mexican waters and in the sea of the Antilles."

Here I could not help interrupting him.

" You wanted to take revenge on Spain, but you did not consider that your revenge affected the fates of merchants and seamen who had never insulted you."

" I see the pertinence of your remark ; but such is the case in every war. The soldiers who die on the

battlefield, the poor peasants whose harvests are destroyed and seized, the citizens whose dwellings are plundered and made desolate, have all to suffer for the crimes of their princes who have begun the strife. I also declared war on Spain, and on all who were Spain's friends ; and I chastised the ungrateful Spanish monarch as well as his subjects. Now, you will perhaps argue, according to a popular idea, that I was a pirate and no monarch by the grace of God ; but I do not acknowledge such a one-sided distinction. I was a sovereign ; I ruled my subjects with unlimited power, and the only difference between my antagonist and myself was, that I reigned over five hundred subjects, whilst he held sway over fifty millions—but this made the contest between him and me all the nobler in my eyes."

"I shall not enter into a dispute which might perhaps lead us too far," said I, smiling at the sophistry by which he endeavoured to justify his conduct ; "only I consider it a very fortunate thing that it is not every one who feels himself called upon to take the law into his own hands, and to mark his career with massacre and plunder. However, this temporal dominion, with all its grandeur, appears to have displeased you in the end, for you renounced it by your own freewill, I believe."

"By his own freewill," repeated Amelia, clinging to her father, "yes, indeed, Mr. Huyck, out of dislike to the life which he was leading. Oh ! do not believe that my father was really moved by those ideas which he has expressed. No, the force of circumstances, the coercion of the pirates in whose power we were, compelled him either to become their chief or their victim ; but how many sleepless nights and hours of agony did he not spend at the thought of the sufferings

of innocent people, or of the booty taken from the unfortunate! Often have I observed how he detested the company of those rough men, and how the idea that their work was punishable in the eyes of Heaven continually oppressed his mind. Pardon me, father, if I have spoken with too much freedom, but your heart was better than your deeds; and often afterwards did you bless the hour in which you determined to bid farewell for ever to that career."

"In any case I shall always bless the hour which made you my daughter," said Van Lintz, affectionately stroking her cheek; "and I must certainly confess that, without you, I should not have so soon arrived at the determination of which you speak; for whether my profession was a criminal one or not, I was, in many respects, attached to it. A man must have been a sailor, Mr. Huyck, to be able to form an idea of the supreme delight one feels when, on board a good ship and at the head of a dauntless crew, one rules the seas and knows no master. But enough of this; whatever may have been my motives, I left my new subjects, and intrusted the command of the band to a youth who had fallen into my hands, together with the same Captain Pulver who recognised me just now. You have seen the fellow, on that evening, near Naarden; it was he who . . ."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "I have seen him since that time; and what is more, he is within half-an-hour's distance from us at this moment. But do not let me interrupt your story."

"The rest is of trifling importance. I travelled to Europe, and arrived safely in France. Here I offered my services at various embassies, but the rumour, or at

least the suspicion, had spread that the Count of Talavera and the pirate Don Manuel were one and the same person, and everywhere I met with refusals. At length I succeeded in obtaining a post at the Russian Court. It was, however, deemed necessary that I should have an interview with the Czar's envoy at The Hague and with the Russian Consul in Amsterdam. Accordingly I left for the Netherlands, but on the frontiers I was already cautioned that in Holland I was looked upon as a deserter, because I had formerly left the Dutch service without leave; and, besides, that the Spanish ambassador demanded my extradition. I was, therefore, advised to travel under an assumed name. Arrived in my native country, I hastened to my aged father, only to find him on his deathbed: my mother and all my brothers had died long ago. Not one of my nearest relations was living except Martha, my old nurse, who, as I learned, dwelt on a farm near Naarden. There I resolved to take refuge, until I should receive information as to whether I could safely venture to travel to Amsterdam, or to send my daughter thither to procure the important papers which I had deposited with the notary Bouvelt. You know the rest."

"Yes," said I, "only I am not yet aware by what means you both arrived on board this vessel, or what your future intentions may be."

"You know that Mr. Blaek, for reasons of no interest to you, had promised me his assistance. On the morning of the picnic at the farmhouse, he took care to be on the spot half an hour before the other guests; and, concealed in his carriage, I rode to Huizen, where his yacht awaited me. Amelia, secretly informed of our scheme, had already embarked at Amsterdam, and thus

we succeeded in escaping from the detectives. When we shall have arrived at our destination, I think I will find an opportunity to proceed to Russia, where, I trust, Providence may permit me, after so many vicissitudes, to spend my last years in peace, and to give my poor daughter that rest of which she stands greatly in need. As for you, Mr. Huyck, once more accept my heartfelt thanks. I know that you kept my secret, and that it has been a source of great annoyance to you."

"No, father," said Amelia, "you do not know all. You do not know what sorrow we have unconsciously caused Mr. Huyck. His sweetest hopes, his most heartfelt wishes, were in danger of being for ever shattered by his becoming acquainted with us. Yes," she continued, with rising emotion, seeing that I was silent, whilst her father looked at both of us with some surprise, "a few words which have escaped Miss Harriet Blaek made things clear to me. I learned, Mr. Huyck, that you loved Miss Blaek, that your love was requited, that her uncle was opposed to the match, and that slanderous tongues, which had represented your acquaintance with me as a criminal one, had made her determine to refuse you her hand."

"What!" cried Van Lintz, looking at me in blank amazement, "is this true, Mr. Huyck?"

"I cannot deny it," I replied; "but as you are leaving these shores, I am no longer obliged to remain silent, and I flatter myself that I shall succeed in justifying my conduct."

"You shall be justified," said Van Lintz, as he rose and walked up and down the deck with hasty strides. "Oh! that accursed promise which I made to old Black! But I am hardly bound by it, as he has misled

me! He told me that his son's marriage with his niece was almost an accomplished fact."

"I know," said I, "that such was his wish; but, as yet, I have not discovered that Miss Harriet and Louis Blaek are very much in love with each other. Why he is so bent upon this match I cannot guess."

"But I can," exclaimed Van Lintz, "he has misled me, I repeat it; but he must not think that he shall use me as his cat's-paw. I will write to him: he shall give you the hand of his niece, and a good dowry into the bargain; or I shall unmask the old hypocrite, and show him in his real colours to the world! I have the means to do so, and he knows it."

"What!" I cried, astonished in my turn, "you would be able to . . . ?"

"It is I who have caused you your grief, and it is only reasonable that I should make good the mischief which I have done. Rest assured the heart of a young girl is not to be played with, and if it only depends on the approval of James Blaek, Miss Harriet shall be yours, that I swear. The only difficulty will be to convince his niece that her suspicions are unjust."

"Oh!" said Amelia, with a bewitching smile, as she stealthily wiped away a tear, "you do not know how gladly a girl believes in the innocence of a man whom she loves. You must not lose courage, Mr. Huyck; I venture to say that you will have no difficulty in convincing Harriet that you never loved any one but her."

"What," cried I, as a new-born hope inspired me, while I felt surprised at her reassuring promises, "you really believe . . . ?"

"~~I am certain of it, but,~~" she continued, as she turned aside, "enough of this subject."

"Yes," said Van Lintz, perceiving her emotion ; "let us speak about something else. You told me just now--that you left my former lieutenant, Sander Gerritz, or Black Peter, as he afterwards called himself, at Ter-schelling?"

I satisfied Van Lintz's curiosity, and my story excited his sympathy and that of his daughter. Both expressed a wish that Sander might accompany them on their journey, and, as well as Van Lintz, seek an opportunity of entering upon a new and honourable career in the service of the Czar. Sander's acquiescence was as good as certain ; for he, doubtless, still felt his old attachment for his former master, and I flattered myself that I should be able to convince him that, even if Clara lived, she would be lost to him. The only thing yet to be done, therefore, was to ask Captain Holmsfeld to take another passenger, and this Van Lintz and I were just about to arrange with him when the two captains came forward.

"Mr. Bos," said Holmsfeld, approaching him, spyglass in hand, "I really think that the very yacht which brought you on board is coming toward us. Would you like to see?"

"Indeed," said Van Lintz, as he put the glass to his eyes, "it looks very much like it."

"Just take a glance, too, Mr. Huyck."

"It is Louis Blaek's yacht!" I exclaimed, recognising the green figurehead with its gilded fretwork, and, taking Van Lintz aside. "Is he also in the secret?" I asked him.

"Certainly not ; and, even if he did know of the affair, he would surely not be shameless enough to show his face to me."

"It would be a strange coincidence, indeed," said I,

"if he had just taken it into his head to make sail this way. At any rate, we must have patience, and see what it means."

We were now disturbed in our contemplations by one of the men, who told us that dinner was served. We went down to the cabin, but Pulver had scarcely eaten a mouthful when he began once more to hold forth on the great resemblance of Mr. Bos to his old acquaintance, Don Manuel, the pirate ; and whether we liked it or not we were obliged to listen to the story of his adventure in the sea of the Antilles. He had not yet finished, however, when all at once we heard a great stir as of a vessel sailing alongside, while the loud talking and calling made us think that some one had come on board.

"I hear strange voices, Captain Holmsfeld," said I, "you had better be on your guard, they might seize your vessel ere you suspected it."

"Perhaps it is the Don Manuel, of whom the captain spoke just now," remarked Holmsfeld, laughing as he rose.

"No. I will wager my head against that," said Pulver, "it might be an acquaintance of his, though," he added, as he cast a suspicious glance on Van Lintz.

"Upon my life it is Mr. Blaek's yacht," said Van Lintz, looking out of the window. "What may be the meaning of this?"

The next moment the door was opened. Captain Holmsfeld entered the cabin, stepped aside, and made room for Louis Blaek, whose company we had certainly neither expected nor desired.

XXIV.

THE arrival of this unwelcome guest caused not a little commotion amongst us. Amelia turned deadly pale, trembled violently, and convulsively grasped the back of her chair with both hands. Her father looked steadfastly at Louis, with eyes ablaze with anger and indignation. I, also, felt uneasy, as I was certain that this meeting would lead to unpleasant scenes.

"I am very happy to see you, sir," Louis began, as he cast a contemptuous glance at Van Lintz, but on recognising me, his features suddenly changed their expression and he turned pale.

"Sit down, Mr. Blaek," said Holmfeld, "we had certainly not expected to be honoured with a visit from you."

"And why not?" said he, with his usual carelessness, "I love the sea. But pray do not disturb yourselves, gentlemen. As I said before I am very fond of a little pleasure trip; besides, I wished to thank this gentleman—turning to Van Lintz—for the honour he has done my yacht by travelling by it. I see that Mr. Huyck is here too! but I am not surprised at that: for with such an attraction . . ." and he looked at Amelia with a grin.

"Sir," said Van Lintz energetically, "I am only a passenger, and the captain may, of course, take on board

whomsoever he chooses ; but let me tell you that, as you were aware of our presence, your unwelcome visit far surpasses all your former insolence."

"Come, Count, or whatever you may call yourself at present," answered Louis, "do not be so ill-natured. If I am well informed, there was a time when you, too, occasionally came on board an uninvited visitor. Captain Pulver, who is sitting here, knows something about it."

"Upon my soul, it's just as I thought," cried Pulver.

"And you, Captain Holmfeld," continued Louis to the astonished man, "you had better keep an eye on your honoured passenger, or he may perhaps take your ship to the Bay of Venzuela."

"Wretch !" cried Van Lintz, livid with rage, "what do you want ? What is the meaning of your words ?"

"I don't understand it at all," said Holmfeld. "Your own father, Mr. Blaek, has recommended me these people."

"Excuse me for saying so, but my father is an old dotard ; however, he would have acted differently had he known that this fine gentleman was a deserter and a pirate."

A short silence followed. The eyes of Van Lintz were blazing with rage, his lips foamed, and he would no doubt have thrown himself upon Louis, but that Amelia stepped up to her father and grasped him round his waist.

"Whatever this gentleman may be," said Holmfeld, "he is my passenger ; his passage has been paid for, and I shall not allow him to be insulted on board this vessel."

"You are right," said Pulver, "whether he is a deserter or not I don't know, but I know that though he was a pirate he treated me very generously, and allowed me to leave without doing me any harm when he might just as soon have had me hanged."

"I am not speaking to you," said Louis; "as for Captain Holmfeld, he had better think twice over what he says, or he shall receive no more commissions from our house."

"Look here," replied Holmfeld with some warmth, "Mr. Bos, or whatever be his name, is under the protection of the Danish flag, and no one shall insult him. As for you, sir, who have come here to pick a quarrel, I would advise you to pack yourself off as soon as possible, or I'll have you thrown between decks, and I'll take you with me to Denmark. What the deuce! I am master on my own ship."

Louis bit his lip. "I am going," said he, in an angry tone, and I shall tell the people at Amsterdam that Captain Holmfeld helps criminals to escape, and that the son of the high-bailiff drinks a parting glass with them."

I had as yet not interfered in the quarrel, but I could not overlook this personal insult.

"Mr. Blaek," said I, "I have been silent until this moment; but let me tell you that you are playing here a contemptible part."

"I have nothing to do with you at present," he replied, "but afterwards you shall give me satisfaction for those words."

"I should long ago have found such an opportunity," I answered, "had not my respect for your father and your cousin restrained me."

"My cousin!" he cried, with a sneer. "It becomes

you very well to talk about my cousin, when I see you in company with your mistress!"

"This is too much!" I exclaimed. "As soon as we are on shore . . ."

"You have heard what I have said," interposed Captain Holmfeld, as he took him by the collar. "Say another word and I'll throw you down the hatchway!"

"One moment," said Van Lintz, exerting himself to the utmost to remain calm; "if there is any one here who has been insulted, it is I. Out of regard for this young man's father, who has rendered me a service, I should perhaps have pardoned his insolence; but now he has attacked the honour of my daughter, and, by Heaven! he shall not return to Amsterdam and there vilify her reputation by his abominable slander. What weapons do you choose, Mr. Blaek?"

Every eye was turned to Louis. For a moment he quailed under Van Lintz's haughty glance; but his features still retained the mocking expression which had not left them from the moment he had set foot on board our ship.

"Ah!" said he, "so you are at length beginning to understand that there is a more dignified way for gentlemen to settle their quarrels than, like navvies, to belabour each other with their fists? Well, I am not very particular as to the weapons, but I should prefer fighting on land. I have never exercised the profession of a pirate; and, although I stand steady enough on my own yacht, I have not been, like some people, in the habit of using a rapier or a pistol on board!"

"Very well," said Van Lintz, "we are within sight of Terschelling; we shall find there some lonely spot where we can settle our quarrel. You will have no

objection to Mr. Huyck and Captain Pulver acting as our seconds?"

"I do not see that we require any seconds," said Louis; "however, I do not mind them. Although it is lonely enough on the Downs, it will be desirable to make as little noise as possible, so I propose the rapier!"

Van Lintz bowed approvingly. The two captains and I looked at each other in surprise. Blaek's choice seemed to us very strange and bold; for, notwithstanding his reputation as a swordsman, he could not expect to equal his powerful antagonist in strength or dexterity; we considered that a duel with pistols would have rendered the chances more equal. There was no alternative, however, as Louis himself had desired it; but the indifference with which he had made his proposal appeared to us as mysterious as was the choice itself.

Amelia's features betrayed intense emotion.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed she, wringing her hands in terror, "must there be a duel for my sake? Have I not suffered enough already, father? And must your last footstep on your native land be marked in blood?"

"Pray calm yourself, Amelia," said Van Lintz. "Mr. Blaek desires a lesson. He wants one badly, and I am prepared to satisfy him! Captain Holmsfeld, will you be kind enough to order the boat to be got ready? I have an idea that we shall not be long absent!"

"I wish," I remarked to Pulver, "that this tea were lying at the bottom of the ocean, and that we had never come here; for Heaven knows how we shall be mixed up in this confounded affair!"

Meanwhile we had left the cabin, and Holmsfeld gave his orders to get the boat in readiness; Van Lintz had gone to fetch his sword and cloak, and Louis, leaning

against the gangway, whistled a tune. Amelia approached me, and whispered—

“ Mr. Huyck, will you promise me to see that there is no foul play? I cannot help mistrusting this Mr. Blaek !”

“ I never had a very high opinion of him,” said I ; “ but we will take care that everything is done in a proper manner. Do not fear, it will end better than you imagine. Your father, if I am not mistaken, only intends to give this reckless youth the lesson which he needs !”

The boat was now ready, and Captain Holmfeld begged us to make haste, as he could not spare his men long. Louis was the first to leap into the boat, and then came Van Lintz, after having cordially embraced his daughter. I shook her hand in silence and followed with Pulver ; but we had not yet sat down when Amelia appeared at the end of the ladder ; and ere we could prevent it, she was with us in the boat.

“ What folly is this ? ” asked her father severely.

“ I must go ashore with you—it is my firm determination ; and you know, father, that as to resolution and a strong will I am your worthy daughter. Do not fear that I shall disturb you. I will remain near the boat. If any serious accident occurs—which the saints forbid—I shall be near at hand, and no one need send to the ship for assistance ! ”

To this there could be no objection, and we immediately moved off and rowed towards the quay. We soon reached the pier, and all of us landed except Amelia. Elbowing our way through the juvenile mob that had assembled we once more traversed the sandy road leading to the village.

"Don't you think," I asked Van Lintz, "that we had better enter the tavern first, and then leave again under the pretext of taking a walk to the Downs? . In this way we would excite no suspicions."

"We will spare you the trouble," muttered Louis, and at the same moment a man made his way to us out of the crowd, and, laying his hand on Van Lintz's shoulder, said—

"You are my prisoner."

"Your prisoner!" exclaimed Van Lintz with amazement, as he laid his hand on his sword.

"Pray, sir, offer no resistance," said the man, in whom I at once recognised William Heynz, pointing to three or four constables standing hard by ; "my agents are well armed!"

"For Heaven's sake surrender yourself!" said I to Van Lintz ; "resistance would be useless!"

"Count of Talavera!" said Louis, with a sneering laugh, "you are a clever diplomatist, but the stratagem which I have made use of in order to entice you from the Danish vessel beats even your . . ."

"You are the most contemptible wretch I have ever known!" I interrupted, with indignation and disgust.

"This piece of roguery may cost him half his fortune!" said Van Lintz. "However, I must yield. Here is my sword, Mr. Heynz; where do you intend to take me? I should like to see my daughter once more, and take leave of her!"

"What has happened?" cried Amelia, who came hurrying up in alarm.

"Nothing, my dear," said Louis; "we have only changed our minds, and you and your father will return in peace to Amsterdam, in my company!"

"Is this necessary?" I asked Heynz. "Are the Bafon and his daughter compelled to travel in that scoundrel's company?"

"I should feel obliged if you will allow me to travel by another vessel; I will pay for it myself," said Van Lintz.

"This is a reasonable proposal," I remarked to Heynz, "you are sent to arrest this gentleman, but not to torture him by the sight of one whom he loathes!"

"There will be no difficulty about it," answered Heynz; "we need not put the Count to needless expense. We shall order a conveyance and dispense with Mr. Blaek's further company. If the Count desires it we will have his luggage fetched from the ship."

"That luggage will, of course, be examined?" asked Van Lintz. Well, so be it. I even desire it to be done; and then I'll be revenged upon this Judas!"

"What . . . what is the meaning of this?" asked Louis, somewhat uneasy. "What has your luggage to do with me?"

As he received no reply he appeared rather confused. It was evident that he would gladly have returned to his yacht, but the words of Van Lintz seemed to have electrified him.

"I think we had better go to the inn," I remarked to Heynz, "there is such a mob here!"

He willingly accepted the proposal, as he wished to inform the authorities of Terschelling of the arrest; and while a couple of constables rowed to the ship to fetch the luggage, we made for the tavern. Heynz led the way, accompanied by Captain Pulver, who was continually expressing his astonishment at the unexpected turn of events. Van Lintz followed with his daughter, whilst I walked at the side—the procession being closed by two

constables. Half of the population followed at our heels, and Louis Blaek, evidently ashamed, shuffled along on the other side of the road. He followed us into the inn, ordered a glass of brandy, which he gulped down at a draught, and then sat down in an obscure corner.

"Where does the bailiff live?" asked Heynz, addressing Reynzen. "I should like to see him at once!"

"I can easily show you where he lives," answered Reynzen. "But he is just now outside with a patient, for he is a doctor as well, you know. He will soon return."

"By the by," said Pulver, "how is that young girl getting on?"

Reynzen shook his head, and told us that she was past all hopes. I sat down, pondering over the strange coincidence which had in a moment brought so many different individuals together, who were all in one way or another connected with each other. Heynz approached me, and I asked him how he had become aware that Mr. Van Lintz was on board the Danish vessel. He told me that Louis Blaek had learned from his mate why his father had used his yacht. He at once suspected that the person who had travelled by it could be none else than Amelia's father, and accordingly he communicated with Heynz. On further inquiries his suspicions were confirmed; so Louis, who no doubt wished to avenge himself on Van Lintz, for the lesson the latter had given him, placed his yacht at Heynz's disposal, in order to overtake the fugitives. In this they succeeded; but as Heynz was not much inclined to board a foreign vessel without a special warrant, Louis volunteered to pay a visit to Captain Holmfeld, and decoy Van Lintz to Dutch territory.

"I am sorry," said I, "that you have so well succeeded. Mr. Van Lintz has saved my life. And, I believe, my father too would have been pleased if that gentleman had escaped!"

"I wish him no harm either," said Heynz, "but you see our reputation is at stake ; just fancy how people would have laughed at me if they had heard that the man we were looking for all over the country had been staying for a fortnight in my own house ! . . . But that doctor is a long while . . . ah ! here he comes."

At the same moment Mr. Doedes, deputy-bailiff and physician, entered the room.

XXV.

"Hm!" said Doedes, looking about him with evident surprise; "large company—many strange faces—constables—hm!"

"How is the poor sufferer?" I asked.

"Hm!—just died—*affactio pulmonaris*—my task done—go home—write my bill—hm!"

"The bailiff, I believe, sir?" asked Heynz, as he shook hands with him, and told him his name and profession. "I should like to speak to you." He then drew the doctor aside to the window, and they conversed for some time together.

"Hm!" I heard the bailiff mutter after awhile, "Terschelling is a place of refuge—ancient privileges—enough encroachments already—hm!"

"What!" exclaimed Heynz, "what do you mean?"

"Not allowable—call magistrates together—important case—violation of authority—hm."

"I cannot understand you," said Heynz. "Do you think it necessary to let the magistrates decide such a simple matter? You see my orders, they are simple and peremptory," and he showed him some papers which he took from his pocket-book.

"Orders—hm!—not legal here—Amsterdam high-bailiff—is master at home—not here."

"But don't you see that it is a warrant issued by the States-General?" resumed Heynz impatiently.

"Hm!—yes—exceptional case—privileges—hm—Terschelling a place of refuge—apprehended without authority—magistrates decide."

Heynz stood transfixed with amazement. He could not understand that a functionary of the law dared oppose a warrant to which even the Amsterdam authorities had submitted. Whilst he appeared to be reflecting by what means he could convince the bailiff of his error, his eye met that of Van Lintz, and the fear that the latter had heard the local bailiff's words, and would take advantage of them, made the perspiration rise to his face, whilst his features underwent such a ludicrous expression, that, in spite of myself, I could not repress a smile.

Van Lintz also smiled; for, although seated at a distance, he had clearly heard the bailiff's words, and was not the man to let them pass unobserved. He rose and approached the two officials.

"It seems, friend Heynz," said he, "that you have acted somewhat rashly, according to this gentleman, at all events."

"Not in the least," said Heynz, vainly endeavouring to hide his vexation. "I have orders for your apprehension wherever I may find you, orders which have been issued by the States-General; and this gentleman is only joking;—or, does Terschelling no longer belong to the Dutch Government?"

"It certainly does," replied Van Lintz, "ever since Charles, Duke of Aarschot, sold it to their High Mightinesses; but such a transaction by no means justifies them to infringe the privileges which the island has enjoyed from times immemorial."

"You are right," replied Heynz, with a sneering laugh;

"from times so immemorial that no one can remember by whom or at what date these privileges were granted."

"Hm!" muttered Doedes, "the prisoner is right—magistrates decide—to-morrow—hm!"

"To-morrow!" cried Heynz; "do you think I came here to amuse myself, and that my presence is not required at Amsterdam?"

"It is really very bad," said Van Lintz, smiling. "I suppose the thieves are already lighting bonfires, in high glee at your absence; but, all joking aside, I really regret that you should have been put to such trouble for my sake."

"*Parbleu!*" cried Heynz, "this is a regular fix. Mr. Huyck, Captain Pulver, pray be kind enough and assist me in bringing this bailiff, or whatever he may be, to his senses. Do explain to him that he will be suspended and punished, if he disobeys the instructions of the States-General."

"Hm!" said Doedes, "Terschelling is a place of refuge, and there's an end to it—hm!"

"The devil take you!" cried Heynz, "Terschelling won't be a refuge for you, I promise you; and I shall report you."

"You had better think twice, Mr. Doedes," remarked Reynzen, who, being a magistrate himself, considered it also his duty to say a word, "this gentleman is not very far wrong, I think; for whatever you do now, the island must afterwards be able to justify before the States-General, as you are aware."

"Hm!—magistrate himself—wants to say something too—bailiff knows better—hm!"

"Exactly," resumed Reynzen; "I am a magistrate myself, and a native of Terschelling into the bargain;

therefore I ought to know the old laws, at least as well as one who was not born here."

"What!" exclaimed Heynz, eagerly taking advantage of this circumstance, "is the bailiff no native of the island? In this case he had better be doubly on his guard how he acts in this matter."

Two or three other individuals who had entered the room during the dispute, and who, as I afterwards learned, were some of the notabilities of the village, agreed with Reynzen, and urged the bailiff to summon the magistrates, and not to provoke any disagreement with the Government for the sake of a questionable privilege. While they were still discussing the subject, Reynzen's wife entered the parlour and whispered to me that the old gentleman who had accompanied me to Ter-schelling wished to see me.

In the turmoil and excitement I had quite forgotten poor Helding. I followed the woman to the back room, where a sad scene awaited me. Helding, seated at the bedside, held the hand of his dead daughter in his own; silent tears flowed down his cheeks, whilst his features wore an expression of anguish that deeply affected me. Opposite him stood Sander, leaning against the wall, gazing fixedly at the corpse before him, whilst his heaving chest betrayed his inward emotion.

I silently pressed the old man's hand.

"God's will be done," he said; "but it is hard indeed for a father to be compelled to say of his child, that her death was better than her life."

"I sincerely sympathise with you," I replied, "and with you also, Sander Gerritz; but," I continued, drawing the latter aside, "be careful, for your life too is in danger. Heynz and his agents are in the next room."

He looked at me with a bewildered glance.

"Beware," said I, thinking that he had not understood me, "do not show yourself; stay here until I come to fetch you. I will give you a letter for Captain Holmfeld. I think there is a good opportunity for you now, and you can sail with him. It is too dangerous for you here."

As I spoke I opened the window overlooking the downs. He stared at me for awhile, then, recovering himself, he nodded approvingly.

"What is the matter?" asked Helding, as he rose and looked at him in astonishment.

"Never mind," I answered, "he is in a dangerous position here; I will explain it all to you afterwards. For the present, let us make some arrangements for your poor daughter's funeral."

We were allowed but little time, for I had scarcely uttered these words when Reynzen's wife came to me again, and said that another gentleman would like to see me before he returned on board."

"Which gentleman?" I asked her.

"Well . . . how can I remember all those strange names . . . ? Blaek is his name, I believe."

"Blaek!" repeated Sander, with violent emotion.

"Calm yourself," said I; "think of the consequences."

"Blaek!" said Helding. "Who? Louis Blaek? Does he come here to insult an old man whose child he has killed, whose grey hairs he has covered with shame? Don't detain me, Mr. Huyck! I must see him! you shall not prevent a father from confronting the murderer of his daughter."

I saw that in a moment these two men would rush into the parlour, and as I could not detain both, I

thought it advisable to grasp the arm of Sander, whose impetuous rage I feared most. Meanwhile Helding had forced his way out, and I immediately followed him, whilst I thrust Sander back, closed and bolted the door upon him, and hurried to the parlour.

As I approached it Helding had just entered, and now stood face to face with Louis Blaek.

"Helding!" he exclaimed with surprise, "how the deuce did you get here, poet?"

"Have you come to look at your work, murderer of my child?" cried the enraged father; "ha! you thought that because you were in the habit of ridiculing an old man, you also had the right of injuring his daughter. But, come, follow me, and see what you have done."

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Louis sullenly. "Is this a new tragedy of yours? or is it a comedy?"

"Heaven knows," replied Helding; "it is a tragedy, and a true one; a curse upon you who are its author. My child is dead, dead! do you understand? and you are her murderer. But come with me, look at her, and see if she still pleases you."

"What have I to do with your daughter?" muttered Louis, upon whom all eyes were bent.

"Have you lost a daughter?" asked Amelia, gently approaching the old man.

"You here, too?" cried Helding, taking her hand. "Oh, my dear lady, you did right in driving this man from your room. Had you given ear to his false protestations, your fate might have been as bitter as that of my poor Clara. Oh! why did I not spurn the reptile with my foot as your father did, instead of accepting his detestable presents? But come, follow me," he con-

tinued, grasping Louis by the arm. " You must, you shall see your victim."

For one who had known both these men before, it was indeed a remarkable contrast to see the complete reversion which had so suddenly taken place in their relations towards each other. Helding, the cringing, fawning scribbler, subservient to the caprices of his superiors, now stood with head erect and in a commanding attitude, beckoning his former patron to follow him; whilst the latter, the haughty, rich, self-asserting youth, walked with downcast eyes and trembling steps behind his guide, to whose moral superiority he was forced to yield.

I and several others who were present accompanied them to the room where Clara lay on her deathbed, and where, to my relief, Sander was no longer. Arrived at the bedside, Helding lifted up the sheet, disclosed the lifeless features of his daughter, and said to Louis—

" Behold your victim!"

For a moment Blaek stood as transfixed; he was deadly pale, his lips were colourless, and a wild glare was in his eyes. At length he recovered himself, and, giving me a savage glance, said—

" It is to you that I owe all this. But I will repay you."

" Do your worst," said I contemptuously.

" Confound it!" he cried, stamping his foot, and then violently tearing himself away from Helding's grasp, he hastily left the inn.

After his departure I remained no longer than was necessary for making arrangements for the funeral, and repaired to the court-house, where the magistrates had already assembled, and where Heynz was present

with his prisoner. Whilst the matter was being discussed, Van Lintz's luggage was brought in from the vessel, and soon after a person, in whom I recognised one of my father's messengers, entered the court and handed Heynz a note.

Having read it, Heynz called me aside—

"This alters the case *considérablement*," said he. "His honour requests me, in the event of my capturing Mr. Van Lintz, to keep him in custody till further orders, and only to forward the papers which may be found on him to Amsterdam."

"That is a good sign for Mr. Van Lintz," said I. "It proves that they have not yet decided in The Hague whether or not to detain him."

Heynz immediately communicated this message to the magistrates. They readily agreed to the measures proposed, by which their alleged privileges remained as yet intact, and a temporary abode was offered to Van Lintz and his daughter. Their luggage was searched, and his papers, after having been sealed, were handed by Heynz to my father's messenger, who left the island again a few hours later.

The bailiff at first intended to have Van Lintz removed to the common gaol of Terschelling, but Heynz determined rather to rely upon the Baron's word of honour that he would not escape, and provided him and his daughter with lodgings in the house of a respectable villager.

The same evening I received a note from Sander, in which he reminded me of my promised letter of recommendation to Captain Holmfeld, adding that he would meet me on the following morning at seven o'clock at a certain spot near the harbour.

Before I retired to rest I wrote the letter, and in the morning rose early, and repaired at once to the appointed place.

On reaching the harbour I was not a little disappointed to observe that the "Kjöbenhavn" had weighed anchor, and was going seawards with full sails. Doubtless Captain Holmfeld dared delay no longer, and thus he deprived Sander of his last hope of entering upon a better career.

I had now arrived at the downs, and I looked about me, but Sander was nowhere to be seen. For a long while I walked to and fro, until at length, getting impatient, I began to suspect that he had also seen the Danish vessel depart; and feeling no inclination to pass the morning in such a desolate spot, I resolved to return to the village.

I had gone about half-way when I heard a faint groaning hard by. I looked round, and in a cavity partly hidden among the bushes perceived a human body. I hastened to the spot, and after all these years I still feel my blood grow cold at the recollection of the ghastly sight that was disclosed to my eyes.

Stretched at full length on the sand lay two bodies: one of which was that of Sander, who was lying face upwards, his glazed eyes fixed in a ghastly stare, whilst the blood which flowed from a wound in the head formed a crimson pool around him. Across him lay Louis Blaek, with his face pressed to the sand, tightly clasping a pistol in his right hand.

With a cry of terror I approached closer, and lifted the body of the latter. His shirt and waistcoat were saturated with blood, and the features stiff as those of a corpse; but a painful sigh which escaped his bosom told me that life was not yet extinct. I quickly tore

open his shirt ; he had a deep gash in the chest, to which I pressed my handkerchief to stem the blood, if possible. As for Sander, he was already cold and stiff, and the bloody knife with which he had probably wounded Louis Blaek had fallen from his hand.

I was at a loss what to do. Not wishing to leave the wounded man, and yet unable to render him any assistance, I looked about me to see whether there was any human being near, when suddenly I beheld an individual who appeared to observe me very attentively. I recognised Andrew Mathissen, and immediately took up Sander's knife to defend myself, if necessary, from an attack of that scoundrel. But he abruptly turned round, shouting "Murder! murder!" at the top of his voice, and ran off towards the village. I rose, and at the same time I saw Pulver and Helding come running up in hot haste.

"Good Heavens! what has occurred here?" asked the latter.

"Are you wounded, master?" inquired Pulver.

"Do not touch the dead bodies, Mr. Huyck," cried Helding, who was not free from the popular superstition on that point; "there's never any good come from it yet."

"But who has done this?" asked Pulver.

"Who has done this?" was now repeated from mouth to mouth, as a number of islanders flocked to the spot. I observed that some of them cast a suspicious glance at me, whilst they looked at one another significantly.

"Pray assist me in carrying these unfortunate men to the village," said I. "One is still alive."

"We shall wait until the bailiff comes—we shall lay

no hands on them—do you think we are mad, that we should touch a corpse?" was the general rejoinder.

"They have murdered one another," said I, replying to Pulver's inquiring glance, "there is no doubt of it."

"Very well, the bailiff will decide that," returned the villagers, and I observed that their eyes were fixed on the knife which I held in my hand.

"That man is quite right in blaming the dead," muttered Andrew, who had returned with the mob, "they can't contradict, he thinks. He's a cunning fellow."

I saw that I was suspected of the murder, and my position was far from pleasant. However, I resolved to make a final effort.

"Friends," I cried, lifting Louis half-way from the ground, "this gentleman is still alive. Will you allow him to die, without making one effort to assist him?"

"Come," said Pulver, "I will help you, master."

"And I as well," said Helding, "although he does not deserve it of me; but I have too much respect for you, Mr. Huyck, to leave him in the lurch."

At the same moment Doedes, Reynzen, and some others came hurrying up.

"Hm," began the former; "two corpses. Murder committed! By whom?"

All were silent; one among the crowd at length pointed to Andrew and said, "This man came to fetch us."

"Of course," replied Andrew, staring at me; "I don't want to accuse great folk, but when a fellow has a bloody knife in his hand . . ."

"Don't believe that fellow," I cried aloud ; "he is a vagabond and a highwayman, against whom you should be on your guard. I arrived here when both the wounded men were lying on the ground. This knife belonged to the dead man. But do not let us lose time in useless talk ; Mr. Blaek may yet recover."

"Hm," said Doedes, "Mr. Blaek is no friend of yours —went out early—duel—hm! will he recover?" and approaching him, he examined the wound ; "hm!" said he, "sharp instrument—deep incision," then, looking at me : "that knife, hm!" I handed it to him : "wound made with this knife—cartilage broken—slow recovery —to be carried home at once."

As he spoke he hastily bandaged Blaek's wounds ; he then approached Sander and examined his injuries : "Hm!" said he, "bullet in the brain—dead as a stone —hm!"

With this he concluded his diagnosis, and stepped aside, together with Reynzen and two or three other notabilities. Their conversation was brief and animated ; and I could gather from occasional glances, that I was the subject of their discourse. On its conclusion, Doedes approached me.

"Follow us—this must be explained," said he.

"With pleasure," I replied ; "but surely you do not believe . . ."

"Well," said Reynzen, "I am very sorry, but there is a heavy presumption against you. You were no friend of the wounded man, sir."

"Are you mad?" asked Pulver. "Mr. Huyck is no murderer!"

"The law shall decide," said Doedes ; "no respect of persons—stop a minute," he continued, seeing that

Andrew was going away ; "we must have that man in court—give evidence."

Andrew was secured, and Louis placed on a litter. Meanwhile, he opened his eyes, and in a half-inaudible voice, asked—

"Where am I ?"

"Now all of you shall hear the truth," I cried, quite delighted. "Blaek, for God's sake ! tell me : who wounded you ?"

For awhile he looked at me in silence as if reflecting, whilst the bystanders crowded round in anxious expectation. All at once a fiendish smile disfigured his features, and, looking me steadily in the face, he replied—

"You."

"Wretch !" I cried, "do you wish to leave this world with a lie on your lips ?"

A deep silence ensued ; Reynzen gave me a pitying look ; Pulver sighed and bit his nails ; Hekling stood as if transfixed, he pressed my hand, whilst the tears gushed from his eyes. As for myself, I was so stunned by the accusation that I could not utter a word, and quite mechanically I followed the people, who slowly made their way towards the village.

XXVI.

THE rumour of the unfortunate accident had already spread far and wide, and it was with great difficulty that we made our way through the crowd around us. Not an old woman had stayed at her fireside, not a child remained at school; all were anxious to see an Amsterdam gentleman arrested for murder. Louis was carried to Doedes' cottage, whilst Andrew and I were conducted to the court-house. In the corridor we had to wait until the magistrates had all assembled for our preliminary examination. At length I was taken inside by two constables, and found the bench filled; Reynzen, who presided, requested me to give an account of the whole occurrence.

When I had done so, Andrew was brought forward.

"Have you anything to say against the witness?" I was asked.

"A great deal," said I; "he is a highwayman, and if Heynz is called in he will confirm my words."

"Very probable," muttered Doedes. "Heynz is a busybody—no evidence against witness—proceed."

"Andrew Mathissen, what have you to declare?" asked Reynzen with a dignity I had little expected of him.

Andrew now made a deposition, which was nothing but a concoction of falsehoods. He had, he said, heard

a pistol shot, on which he hurried to the spot, when he saw Sander lying on the ground, whilst I was struggling with Mr. Blaek. After a short fight, the latter fell, and then he had at once run to the village to call assistance.

Pulver was called and examined in his turn.

"Well," said he, "I know nothing of the whole affair, except that when I arrived on the spot with Mr. Helding, I saw Sander lying on his back, and Mr. Blaek across him, whilst Mr. Huyck stood by as one who was at a loss what to do. But I will never believe that he has had a hand in this nasty business."

"Hm!" said Doedes, "your opinion is not required, depose, nothing more."

"But what made you go to the downs?" asked Reynzen.

"Mr. Helding and I went out to seek Mr. Huyck, as we were beginning to feel uneasy at his long absence," answered Pulver in his simplicity.

"There was a reason, then, to be uneasy?"

"That is to say," replied the honest captain, with some confusion, "Mr. Huyck received a note yesterday, and we thought it was from Mr. Blaek; in short, we were afraid that there would be a duel between them."

I felt my blood grow cold, for I well knew what conclusions would be drawn from this declaration.

"Hm, hm!" said Doedes, looking round triumphantly, "that settles the case—clear as daylight—hm!"

Helding, who now came forward, corroborated Pulver's evidence, and added one or two reasons which might have moved Sander to take revenge upon Louis. Helding and the captain were asked if they recognised the blood-stained knife which was laid on the table,

but they both declared that they had never seen it before.

"Gentlemen," said I, "you must consider that the evidence of the wounded man against me is of no weight at present, he was confused, and did not know what he said at the time. If he recovers, as I trust he will, I have no doubt that he'll withdraw his accusation."

"The accused is right," remarked the chairman. "Besides, bailiff, we do not yet know what you charge him with, if with murder or with a common assault; we shall therefore suspend the case for the present, meanwhile, the accused must remain in custody, and the witnesses are to stay here until a further examination can be held."

The court now adjourned, and I was led to prison. Such places are seldom very comfortable, and the gaol of Terschelling formed no exception to the general rule. It was a small, damp, barewalled cell, all its furniture consisting of a table with only three legs, a chair with a broken seat, and a wooden crib, which had evidently done lengthy service.

Left to myself, I sat down and endeavoured to concentrate my thoughts, for the events of the day had plunged my mind into such a state of confusion, that everything appeared as a wild dream, and it was long before I arrived at a full perception of my condition. At length, however, the fearful truth disclosed itself in all its nakedness to my eyes. I, the son of the high-bailiff of Amsterdam, was charged with the crime of murder, and apparently none but the most forcible proofs would suffice to nullify the strong evidence brought against me. Then again, I thought of my parents, of my dear mother, whose delicate constitution would never bear the news that her

son was accused of such a fearful crime, and of my father, who, with his characteristic stoicism, would hide and bear his grief, but whose sufferings would be all the more acute afterwards. And the agonising thought that a stranger would probably exaggerate the accident, or place it in an unfavourable light, and would communicate it to them ; and that then they would perhaps curse the name of a son who covered their grey hairs with shame, was indeed terrible, and the longer I thought the greater grew my agony.

At length, after several hours of fearful solitude, the door of my cell was opened and Heynz entered.

"Thank Heaven!" I cried, "I am not yet wholly forsaken."

"Mr. Huyck, Mr. Huyck!" he exclaimed, with a thoughtful look, "to think that I should see your father's son in such a predicament."

"Well," said I, giving him my hand, "you do not believe me guilty, of course?"

"*Ma foi*, all the evidence is against you ; but I cannot understand why you do not confess, for I presume you inflicted that wound in self-defence."

"What! you also believe me guilty?" I cried, with bitter disappointment.

"What can I say? There are two witnesses against you . . ."

"One of whom is my enemy, and the other a scoundrel."

"Yes, that Andrew won't escape the gallows, that is certain ; but why does he harbour any resentment against you?"

"Why! first of all, out of innate malice ; secondly, because I am the son of a high-bailiff ; and, lastly, because he bears me an old grudge, and his knife would

long ago have finished me if it had not been for Mr. Van Lintz."

"Very well, Mr. Van Lintz shall be examined ; but would Mr. Blaek so far forget himself as to make a false accusation against you ? It is possible, but it would be most abominable."

"I still believe that, if he lives, he will withdraw his accusation."

"I do not think so, for he is somewhat recovered, and he has confirmed his statement."

"Well, then, in that case, I am convinced that his deposition must vary from that of Andrew."

"So it does. But, *ma foi*, even if you had in a moment of anger or otherwise made a thrust at that knave Blaek, I should not at all blame you."

"But I repeat once more, my hands are free from his blood, and . . ."

"I believe you, Mr. Huyck, I believe you ; and if I spoke differently just now, it is because I am accustomed to speak to accused persons, who at first are always thought to be guilty, for, otherwise one would never get at the truth. But now, another question : can I be of any service to you ?"

"Could you procure me some writing materials ? I am anxious to inform my father of this unfortunate occurrence before he hears the news from a stranger."

"I fear that the magistrates will not grant you permission to write ; but let me fulfil that unpleasant task. I will send your father a letter and tell him that it is yet uncertain whether you will appear in the dock or as a witness. I shall place the matter in a favourable light, rest assured of that."

I was very far from placing implicit confidence in

Heynz's tact and prudence, but there was no help for it.

" You are not well lodged here," he continued ; " I will speak to Reynzen about it. There is no reason to treat you as a common felon, when you can pay for a good room. But, *à propos*, ere I forget it, Mr. Van Lintz, his daughter, and poor Helding send you their regards. I really don't know who is the more distressed of the two about your case, the old poet or the young lady. The former does nothing but swear and grumble, the latter is in despair, and accuses herself of being the cause of it all."

" Amelia ? But she is wholly innocent."

" *Ma foi*," said Heynz, smiling, " not quite ; if she had not unconsciously allure^d Mr. Blaek, he would not have followed her, and would, therefore, not be here now ; *enfin*, the one is a consequence of the other."

" And Captain Pulver ? "

" He wanted to go to Amsterdam to lodge a complaint against the Government of Terschelling for having had the impudence to imprison you, but I persuaded him not to leave, as his evidence may be of service to you. But now I must bid you farewell, for I must seize the opportunity and write to your father. I shall see that you receive better furniture." Heynz left me and kept his word, for an hour later a bed, a table, some chairs, and my luggage were brought.

I will not describe the gloomy nights and miserable days which I spent in prison, only visited by Heynz, who from time to time brought me news of what occurred. Louis Blaek's wound appeared to be less dangerous than had at first been feared, but continual fevers had greatly weakened him. It was hoped, however, that his youth

and his strong constitution might yet save him. With regard to the assault, he still held by his former deposition, so that my case did not as yet appear to take a better turn.

It was on the sixth day of my incarceration, when I was gloomily thinking of home and friends, that I heard the door open. I looked up with some surprise, for it was not the usual visiting hour, and I stepped back in astonishment at seeing Reynhove before me.

"Reynhove!" I exclaimed, "tell me how are my relatives?"

"Your father, mother, and sister are well, and your aunts also, and Miss Blaek too; they know everything, and are greatly shocked."

"I daresay; Louis's condition . . ."

"Yes, and the death of Miss Blaek's uncle too . . ."

"What!" I cried, "is old Mr. Blaek dead?"

"Yes, he retired from this world before his time. But if you do not allow me to proceed, you will never hear the news properly. A few days after your departure from Amsterdam, their High Mightinesses at The Hague, being hard pressed by the remonstrances of the Russian envoy, with whom they thought it best to keep friends, and moved by the urgent entreaties of the Amsterdam authorities, as well as by those of some of the most influential members of the nobility, decided not to surrender Mr. Van Lintz to Spain, or to treat him as a deserter, as it now appears that he had sent in his resignation, with the exception of a few formalities, at the time of his escapade with Miss Reefsail. In short, all difficulties are removed, and the warrant for his arrest is to be rescinded. With this good news I was despatched to the Amsterdam authorities, and was

glad to deliver this message, as I knew that the news would please your father, and besides—why should I deny it?—there was something else that attracted me to Amsterdam, and particularly to your house."

"What!" I interposed, "do you entertain such thoughts?"

"Your sister, Susannah, is a lively girl," he answered, laughing; "but I should be happy indeed if she would make me a permanent target for her witty onslaughts. However, I have other things to tell you. I found your father at the Town Hall; just as old Mr. Blaek was leaving him, who seemed far from happy. When I told the high-bailiff my errand, he wanted to despatch an express messenger to Terschelling, with orders to set Mr. Van Lintz at liberty; but whilst we were still speaking, a letter arrived from Heynz, stating that Louis Blaek had been wounded, and that you were detained as a witness. . . . I could see your father turn pale on reading the letter, and I knew at once that there was something wrong. He recovered himself, however, and calmly handed it to me. I also was alarmed at its contents.

"'This news will be a great blow for old Mr. Blaek,' said I, 'but I cannot understand how your son can be concerned in the matter.'

"'I can,' he answered; 'they provoked each other. One has fallen a victim to that fatal point of honour; and the other, who is my son, must suffer the vengeance of the law. O Mr. Reynhove! I am an unhappy father!'

"I sincerely sympathised with the good man, and offered to go myself to Terschelling, and learn how the case stood. He hesitated for a moment, but ultimately accepted my proposal.

"As I could not leave till the evening, I repaired to Mr. Blaek's, in order to tell him of his son's accident, but was told that he was engaged, and that he requested me to return in an hour's time. I did so, and when I arrived at his house at the appointed time, the old man was a corpse. It is supposed that he has poisoned himself."

"Terrible! and what may have been his motives?"

"It is a mystery. It could not have been grief at his son's accident, for he did not know of it; but, no doubt, time will solve the mystery. Harriet was in despair. I sent for your father. He came, as well as your mother and Miss Susannah. . . . In short, it was a scene of grief and desolation. On the table of the deceased lay a sealed letter addressed to his son, which, we presume, will throw a light on the whole matter. At all events, it was necessary that young Blaek should be informed of his father's death, so I made sail for this island on a threefold mission."

"And . . . Miss Blaek?"

"She is in an agony of grief, as you may suppose. Well, directly on my arrival here I repaired to a fellow who goes by the name of Doedes—a quack and a humbug, I assure you."

"I know him to my sorrow," said I.

"Well, I commenced by communicating to him and Heynz the order for the liberation of Mr. Van Lintz; then I went to Louis, and, after due preparation, I told him of his father's decease. I am sorry to say that he was more astonished than shocked at the sad news; in fact, he disgusted me, and I soon took my departure, leaving him the letter, which, I trust, will make more impression upon him. I then told Doedes that I

must see you, and with all his nonsense the fellow dared not refuse a gentleman so elegantly attired, and the bearer of an order from their High Mightinesses. So now I am here, and right annoyed at your being in such a ridiculous predicament; for I hear that you have not been fighting a duel, but that Louis accuses you of an attempt to murder him."

"He lies, Reynhove; by all that is dear to me, he lies!"

"Then it is a wicked lie indeed, and I only hope he will repent. But . . ."

At this moment our interview was disturbed by a great noise outside the door, and Reynzen, Pulver, Helding, and Heynz appeared almost simultaneously on the threshold, all of them beginning to speak at once.

XXVII.

"MR. BLAEK wants to see you," began Reynzen.

"He will haul in sail," cried Pulver.

"He will not die with a lie on his lips," said Helling.

"Mr. Van Lintz has been liberated," exclaimed Heynz.

"Gentlemen," said I, rising, "we can all very well sing together, but it is not desirable that we should all talk together. May I ask what has happened, and what is the news you bring?"

"Silence," said Reynzen, as the others once more began to shout amongst each other, "listen, sir. Mr. Blaek has received a letter from his father, who, God forgive him, has committed suicide. How the case really stands I don't know; but he desires to speak to you, as well as to Mr. Van Lintz, and to this gentleman"—pointing to Reynhove. "I sincerely trust that it may be to your advantage, Mr. Huyck. Be kind enough to follow me."

There was no command with which I could have more readily complied, and in a few minutes we were all at Doedes' house.

We immediately followed the bailiff to the sick-room, where we also met Mr. Van Lintz and his daughter, who, on our entry, rose and pressed my hand in silence. I cast my eyes on the bed, and I could not help pitying

the sufferer. Those features, yet recently so manly and bold, had undergone a sad change ; the bones protruded through the wan skin, an ashen pallor was spread over the entire countenance, whilst the deep sunken eyes were fixed and glassy. The patient was lying on his back, and so motionless that at first I thought him dead. He appeared, however, to have noticed my approach, for he turned his head towards me, a faint blush suffused his features, and then, in a broken voice, he inquired whether the notary had yet arrived.

"Notary gone to the south," answered Doedes ; "sent message—will come as soon as he returns."

This delay appeared to annoy him. He made an attempt to raise himself, and was so weak that he had to be assisted by the servant who attended him. Meanwhile we were all in painful suspense to hear him speak.

"Gentlemen," he began, in a faint and trembling voice, which gradually grew in strength and firmness, "I feel that it will soon be . . . all over with me ; and I wish . . . as far as I can, to make good what I have spoilt."

Here he stopped short for a moment, as though he wished to gather fresh strength for what was to follow.

"The first thing which I have to do," he continued, "is to declare, in the presence of the presiding sheriff and of the bailiff, that I have accused Mr. Huyck falsely . . . and that he is wholly innocent of the wound which will cause my death."

"Thank Heaven," I heard Amelia say softly, and my heart re-echoed her exclamation.

"Hm !" said Doedes, "*confessio in articulo mortis* ; first say one thing—now another—murder committed for all that—assassin in the churchyard ?"

"Yes," replied Helding, "in the churchyard he lies, next to my poor child; I interred them both last Monday. They were parted in life, but are united in death."

"If it does not too much fatigue the patient," said Reynzen, "he ought to give us some further details."

Louis nodded approvingly, and Reynzen, seating himself, prepared to take down his declaration in writing.

"Mr. Van Lintz," resumed Louis, "will recollect having said a few words to me about some papers in his possession which might affect my private fortune. I know now that this threat was well founded, but this I shall explain later on. Suffice it to say, that it made me uneasy, and that this was the reason why I stayed here, as I wished to see what would be the consequences of Mr. Van Lintz's arrest. I was alarmed, excited, and somehow I felt that I had acted wrongly, out of a blind love of revenge against Mr. Van Lintz; out of love and hatred for his daughter; for I do not know how to term the feeling which she inspires me with. I had so far debased myself as to become a sleuth-hound of the law, and too late I saw how contemptible I was making myself in the eyes of every one; in short, I was full of anger and malice; but, as it usually happens in such cases, I accused everybody except myself. I cursed Mr. Van Lintz, I cursed my foolish passion, I cursed Heynz—but I looked upon Mr. Huyck as my mortal enemy. After the capture of the Count, I returned to the yacht, but spent a sleepless night, and at daybreak went again on shore with a pair of pistols, intending to challenge Mr. Huyck to fight a duel. Not finding him at the inn, I made my

way to the downs to seek him, when I encountered Sander Gerritz. As soon as he saw me, he commenced to abuse me, and called me the murderer of his love. I am not very docile by nature, and being in an extremely ill-humour at the moment, I dealt him a blow in the face, on which he clutched me by the throat and a struggle ensued between us, to which I put an end by shooting him through the head. He staggered, but though dying, drew a knife, plunged it into my bosom, and then fell back a corpse. Almost simultaneously I swooned, and did not recover until I saw Mr. Huyck by my side, whilst at that moment some fiend whispered to me to accuse him of the murder. I succumbed to this temptation, and afterwards the love of revenge and my hatred of Mr. Huyck made me adhere to my accusation. The shocking news, however, which I have received to-day, and the explanation sent to me by my unhappy father, have opened my eyes. I now see that God leaves no evil unavenged. I shudder at myself, and at the thought of all the wrongs which I have inflicted. Would to Heaven that I could make reparation for them all, as I do for this one . . . and you, Mr. Huyck . . . my dear young lady . . . my good Helding . . . forgive me . . . and may God forgive me too."

With these last words his voice became inaudible, and he fell back exhausted on his pillow. We approached closer to his bed and gave him the assurance he desired.

"I forgive you," said Van Lintz, "for I know too well from my own experience whither injured self-esteem and violent passions can lead us. You yearned for revenge ; I know that feeling ; I also once yielded to it to a fearful extent!"

With this he stepped aside, and stood wrapt in gloomy meditation.

Helding pressed the sufferer's hand in silence, unable to give vent to his overflowing emotions. I now approached in my turn.

"I assure you, Mr. Blaek," said I, "that I no longer harbour the least angry feeling towards you, and I pray that the Almighty may not only forgive you as completely as I forgive you, but that He may preserve you and permit you to commence a better life!"

"Hm!" said Doedes, approaching his patient and feeling his pulse—"weak—lassitude—too many here—hm!"

"Yes," said Reynzen, "I think everything is settled now. I have taken down the patient's declaration. If he desires to hear it read, and feels strong enough to sign it, I see no reason why we should not at once set Mr. Huyck free; for I don't care a jot for the deposition of Andrew Mathissen; and, as I hear from our friend Heynz, he runs a greater risk of swinging on the gallows himself than bringing others to it!"

Louis expressed himself willing to listen to the reading of the document, and to sign it, which he did with the utmost difficulty. We were about to take our leave of him, when he signified to us that there was still something on his mind which he would only confide to Van Lintz, Reynhove, and myself; he begged, therefore, all others to leave the room.

His request being granted, he sat staring at the door for a few minutes, as though he feared that any one would return, and then, turning to Reynhove, he said, with an impatient gesture—

"Push the bolt ; and you, Huyck, just fill that wine-glass again . . . my lips are burning !"

I offered him the glass ; he slowly emptied it, whilst we looked at one another, wondering how it would all end. At length he put his hand under the pillow, produced a paper, and, with a glance at Van Lintz, asked—

" You have known my father long ago, sir ? "

Van Lintz replied with a bow.

" No doubt you have heard how he died !" continued Louis ; " but what neither you nor any one knows —what I myself have only learnt at this very moment is, the agony which he suffered, and to which he at length succumbed. However, it is desirable that you should know this, so that when others ruthlessly condemn him, you may, at least, testify that he deserves as much pity as blame. Read this letter aloud, Huyck, and you will feel how it must have affected me ! "

I took the paper and read as follows :—

" By the time that you will receive this letter, my son, your father will have appeared before the Divine throne of judgment. The pangs of a long-tortured conscience urge me to leave this world, and it was you, you alone, who might have given me rest, and have enabled me to pass the last years of my life in peace—it was you who hastened that step which leads me to eternity !

" Oh ! that I had spoken sooner ! Perhaps then you would have fulfilled my wishes in endeavouring to win the love of her whom I had destined for you. A marriage between yourself and your cousin would have settled everything—but it might not be ! You were unworthy of such an amiable, virtuous wife ; and it was my destiny to be punished for my misdeeds, and to fly

for refuge to the grave from the shame which in this world awaited me.

"Well, time flies, and I must hasten to use my last remaining energy. Listen then, and pity me! Do not curse me; and let my example be a warning to you!"

"You may have heard that in former years my brother and I had much trouble to gain a livelihood, and that therefore we went to foreign parts to seek our fortune.

"From my very childhood an insatiable desire for riches had been my ruling passion. I saw so much wealth and luxury around me that I could not bear the idea of being poorer than those who were my equals in birth and position. Yet such seemed to have been my destiny; for my father had but a small income, and was not of a parsimonious nature. Arrived at a mature age, I resolved that a marriage should be the first step towards attaining my object, and I succeeded; I did not look for beauty or virtues; I sought a rich wife, and married her for her money. My first punishment was the unhappy life which I led with your mother. She died, and showed her hatred of me by stipulating, in her will, that you should inherit her fortune, and that not one penny should fall to my share. Now I was poorer than I had been before. I therefore resolved to intrust you to the care of your mother's relatives, and to leave for the West Indies to seek my fortune.

"But the result did not justify my expectations. After years of adversity I returned, and arrived at Lisbon. There I met the Count of Talavera, then on a mission from the Spanish Court, and I renewed the acquaintance which I had formerly formed with him when he was Baron Van Lintz. From him I obtained

news of my brother, who was his brother-in-law, for they had each married a Miss Reefsail, and I learnt that he had also gone to seek his fortune in foreign lands, and was hourly expected in Lisbon from the Levant, where he was engaged in some business. My ~~mother~~^{wife} came, but his appearance did not speak of wealth. Scarcely had he been a few days with us when he was attacked by a severe illness. The Count of Talavera was the first to warn him that, according to the physician, his life was drawing to a close, and that he should, therefore, settle his worldly affairs. My brother smiled sadly, and said that this would not take very long. ‘I wish I could have seen my daughter, who is at Amsterdam,’ he continued, ‘and could have handed her the treasures which I hoarded for her. But now James will have to do this!’ The Count and I looked at one another in astonishment, for we could not understand whence these treasures could come. My brother then produced a stout clumsy cane which stood at the foot of the bed, and requested me to unscrew the knob and to shake out the contents on the table. I did so, and now, to our amazement, we discovered that the cane was hollow, and entirely filled with precious stones of the first water. My brother took a few of them, and handing them to me, said, ‘These are for yourself; and if you sell them they will assist you in retrieving your fortune. The rest you must give to my daughter as her father’s inheritance.’ At his desire a jeweller was summoned, and an inventory was taken of their approximate value.

“Of this document duplicates were handed to the Count of Talavera and to myself, which we both signed. A few days afterwards my brother died in my arms, and with his last words admonished me to take care of

his daughter. Directly after the funeral I returned to Amsterdam.

"Meanwhile I was not satisfied with what my brother had left me when I thought of what he had bequeathed to his daughter ; and, without reflecting that he had never enjoyed his hard-earned treasures, whilst I still had a future before me, I began to envy my niece, who had so easily obtained a rich inheritance to which, without her, I alone should have had a claim. It was then as though a diabolical voice whispered to me, ' Why should you take such treasures to your niece ? Keep them for yourself, do business with them, and settle the matter with her in some other way. No one will be any the wiser for it, and the Count of Talavera certainly will not trouble himself about it in Spain.' At Amsterdam my brother's death was already known, and so well had he guarded his secret that everybody thought he had died in comparative poverty. I was mean enough not to disabuse any one. I sold my jewels— —or rather those of my niece—not all at once, but gradually, and commenced a business, which I quickly extended. I prospered. It seemed as if the ill-gotten money was blessed in my hands ; but, inwardly, I was far from enjoying my prosperity.

"Some years elapsed, when one day—I still tremble at the thought—I received a letter from the Count of Talavera. He wrote to say that he had heard that I had become very wealthy, whilst my niece was living in seclusion ; in short, his letter plainly showed that he suspected the real state of affairs. He finished by saying that he would forward a duplicate of the inventory to Amsterdam, and deposit it with the notary Bouvelt. This news alarmed me ; and, in order to parry the threatening blow,

I immediately took my niece from the boarding-school, received her into my house, and treated her as my own child. Soon after I learnt that the Count had fallen into disgrace, and a year later it was said that he had died in America. Now I was relieved from my greatest anxiety, for I still hoped that he had not carried out his threat of sending over the duplicate. Meanwhile I had begun to love Harriet as my own daughter, and the better I knew and the more I cherished her the bitterer grew my remorse for having treated her unfairly. It was then that an idea arose in my mind that a marriage between you and her would settle everything ; and I need not repeat to you now how I plodded and worked to attain that object.

"Imagine my terror when, a few days since, I met at Bouvelt's house the man whom I thought dead, and learnt from him that the fatal inventory, together with other papers, had long ago been sent to the notary, and that he now came to fetch them. He threatened to expose me, and I might even then have saved myself from disgrace if I had returned my niece her fortune, and told her that for good reasons I had kept it from her until that day. But false shame prevented me from taking this step ; I feared that the real state of affairs might be discovered, and I entreated Mr. Van Lintz not to rob me of my reputation. I alluded to your marriage with Harriet as an almost accomplished fact, and offered to exert my influence with the authorities, and to assist him in his escape. At length, yielding to my entreaties, he agreed to send me the duplicate as soon as he should be in safety, and on receiving the news of your marriage.

"Your rash deed in delivering the man from whom I

had everything to fear into the hands of justice has shattered all my hopes. The duplicate, together with the other papers found upon him, has been seized, and is now in the hands of the high-bailiff at Amsterdam. I have this moment left his office. He had summoned me before him to explain to him the meaning of the words : ‘Inventory of the jewels, &c., formerly belonging to Mr. Henry Blaek, and now the property of his daughter, Harriet Blaek.’ What my reply was I do not know, but I do know what will be the consequences of the opening of this document ; I will not outlive the shame that awaits me ; may God forgive me for the manner in which I leave this life ; and may He cause you to turn from the evil path which you have hitherto followed, and allow you to take warning by the wretched example of your unhappy father, James Blaek.”

“ You see, gentlemen,” said Louis, hiding his head in his hands, “ I have been the cause of my father’s death. But, Mr. Van Lintz, can nothing be done to spare his memory ? As for Harriet, she shall have back her property, and more.”

“ Sir,” answered Van Lintz, “ Mr. Reynhove has returned me the papers which were taken from me ; if the document in question is amongst them I shall send it to your cousin. She alone may decide what is to be done with it.”

There was a knock at the door, the notary was announced, and we left him and the sufferer together. Two days later Louis Blaek expired. My friends and myself then embarked for Amsterdam, taking the dead body with us.

At Harlingen I took leave of Van Lintz and his daughter, who were about to continue their journey overland.

"Well, my friend," said the former, grasping my hand, "now I think it will really be the last time that I take leave of you. I wish you every success in your undertakings, and I trust you will watch over the interests of my niece; I am vexed that I have not guarded them better myself; but I know you will protect her; you have a twofold reason for doing so."

"I am only afraid that she will still be too much prejudiced against me to appoint me her protector."

"Did I not assure you that the reverse was the case?" said Amelia, in a tone of reproach. "Go to her, and do not hesitate to tell her the whole unvarnished truth; she will believe you, you may be convinced of it. When you see her, give her this from her cousin, and ask her to wear it in loving remembrance of her."

As she spoke she handed me a necklace, which, during her stay at Terschelling, she had plaited from her own lovely hair, at the end of which she had affixed a gold ornament.

"And will you leave me no souvenir?" I asked, as I cordially shook her hand.

"Not now; perhaps I shall send you one when we have arrived at our destination; and then I shall expect one from you and from your wife."

With this she drew her veil over her face and quietly stepped into the carriage which awaited her. Her father sat down by her side; the driver smacked his whip, and very soon they were out of sight. I never saw them again.

Eighteen hours afterwards I was at home in my mother's arms, and I will not attempt to describe the emotions which we all experienced.

The following day Reynhove came to fetch me, and

asked me to accompany him to Miss Blaek, who, he said, had inquired for both of us. We found her alone, charming as ever, but pale, exhausted, and overwhelmed with grief. She blushed and seemed rather confused on seeing me, but, soon recovering herself, she placed chairs for us, and sat down herself.

"Gentlemen," she began, "you were at the deathbed of my poor cousin Louis . . . ?"

"Yes, Miss Blaek," I replied, searching for some papers I had in my pocket, "and I have been commissioned . . . "

"One moment," she resumed; "before we touch upon any other subject, I should like to know whether any one besides yourself, Mr. Reynhove, and Mr. Van Lintz knows anything about a certain letter addressed by my late uncle to Louis."

"No one," I answered, "I have that letter, and will hand it to you, but . . . "

"But first, let me tell you that my uncle Van Lintz wrote me a letter, in which he tells me why my unhappy uncle Blaek took so fatal a step, and in which he also enclosed a document which proves my claim to a considerable fortune. I wept on seeing my poor father's signature, and thought of all the trouble and anxiety which the good man must have suffered in order to accumulate a fortune for my sake. I have cut out that signature, and have burnt the paper."

"What!" exclaimed Reynhove with amazement, "you have destroyed such a precious document!"

"I am too much indebted to my late uncle, and I have received too many proofs of his love, for me to reward his kindness by tarnishing his good name now that he is dead. With Louis the secret went to the grave; my

uncle Van Lintz will not mention it if I ask him not to do so ; and I expect that you also will respect it, gentlemen ; people have ascribed my uncle's death to apoplexy, let them remain in that belief."

"But you do not know, Miss Blaek, that you have sacrificed an important fortune ?" asked Reynhove.

"Miss Blaek has sacrificed nothing," said I ; "and although the merits of her generous deed are just as great, the pecuniary loss which it entails is entirely removed by the document which I now have the honour to hand her. It is the last will and testament of Mr. Louis Blaek, heir to his father's property, in which he appoints his cousin, Miss Harriet Blaek, his sole heiress."

Harriet accepted the paper with trembling hands. She was speechless with emotion, and made no reply to Reynhove's congratulations.

"Miss Blaek" I continued, when she had somewhat receded ; "in his last moments the deceased expressed a desire that I should be the person to hand you his will ; and he added that it would probably . . . give you pleasure . . . to receive that document at my hands. May I flatter myself with the idea that he guessed aright ?"

"Sir," she replied, as the pallor of her features turned to a vivid crimson, "you are no doubt aware that I received a visit from my cousin Amelia on the morning of her departure from Amsterdam."

I was astonished. So this guileless creature had not hesitated to run the risk of an inhospitable reception solely to vindicate my conduct.

It now became quite clear to me why Amelia had given me such a positive assurance on the day I bade her farewell.

"And may I hope," said I, "that after that visit you formed a more favourable opinion of me?"

"Amelia is an angel," said Harriet, "and I shall never forgive you for not having fallen in love with her. What she said . . . how she . . . in short, I feel it my duty to ask your pardon, for I have greatly misjudged you."

Six months afterwards the banns were published in the Old Church at Amsterdam, between William Andrew Reynhove, Gentleman, Baron of Wydeplas, Lord of Groenewoud, &c., and Miss Susannah Beatrice Huyck ; and also between myself and Miss Harriet Blaek.

Mr. Van Lintz, relieved of all his anxieties, settled in Russia, and rendered the State some important services. He obtained a high rank, and soon rose in the favour of the Czar. As for Amelia, she led a quiet and secluded life during the early part of her residence in Russia, and for a long time resisted her father's desire to visit the court. At last she yielded, and, to please her parent, married a favourite of the Czar, a worthy nobleman, but double her age. She led an exemplary life, died at a ripe old age, and left a memory which was blessed by all who knew her.

My brother, myself, and wife were fortunate enough to see most of our family well married and in good circumstances.

My sister, Mrs. Reynhove, leads a happy life with her husband. He bade farewell to all revels and noisy company, rose to a high official post, and rendered some eminent services to his country.

Kasper Weinstube, after many vain endeavours to gain admission into the higher circles of society, and to seek a partner of his joys and sorrows from amongst his

superiors, ended by marrying his cook. His children, who had received a better education than fell to their father's share, soon made people forget their humble origin; and their descendants are now in daily intercourse with those families whose acquaintance had always been Kasper's supreme ambition.

The "Poems of Helding" may still be found in the libraries of some of our well-to-do citizens, and occasionally they are even to be met with on bookstalls, but I doubt whether they have many readers.

William Heynz continues an efficient servant of the law, and never exercises more his profession as an artist; however, the noble art of painting has not suffered from the loss.

In conclusion, I may add, according to the testimony of my friends, that a descendant of little Simon the pedlar, who is strongly suspected of following in the path of his ancestor, in rendering occasional assistance to the police, may daily be seen in the Schapen Square during the winter with a hot-potato can, and in the summer with a shoeblack's box, eternally crying, for the benefit of all who may put faith in his protestations, "I ain't got a farthing about me, may I never move!"

THE END.

THE COUNT OF TALAVERA.

**PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO
EDINBURGH AND LONDON.**

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THE

COUNT OF TALAVERA

From the Dutch of J. van Lennep

BY

A. ARNOLD

LONDON

J. C. NIMMO & BAIN

14 KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1880

THE COUNT OF TALAVERA (FERDINAND HUVCK) is considered one of the masterpieces of Dutch literature. This is why it has been brought out in the "Modern Foreign Library Series," although it was published in Holland several years ago.